

Moutsis, Ioannis (2014) The Turkish Cypriots (1918-1931) : from a religious community to an ethnic minority. SOAS University of London.

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The Turkish Cypriots (1918-1931):  
From a Religious Community to an Ethnic Minority.

Ioannis Moutsis

Thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD in History

2014

Department of History  
School of Oriental and African Studies  
University of London

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## Thesis Abstract

This dissertation examines the Turkish Cypriot community in the period from 1918 to 1931, that is, during the time that the ethnogenesis of the community took place. The thesis argues that this process took place within that period under the influence of three factors: the emergence of Turkish nationalism in mainland Turkey, the Greek Cypriot *Enosis* movement and the intransigence of the colonial government. Furthermore, I argue that the consolidation of nationalism among the Turkish Cypriots caused the emergence of a nationalist elite. This elite, which was not controlled by the colonial government, entered into a debate with the traditional elite about the control of the religious institutions and the transformation into a Turkish-Kemalist entity according to the principles set by Kemal Atatürk. I used newspaper articles and archival sources, part of which had not been used in the past, in order to reassess the process of the ethnogenesis of the Turkish Cypriot community. By doing so, I attempted to disassociate the issue of the ethnic transformation of the Turkish Cypriot community from the narration of the later stages of Turkish Cypriot history. In this way, the thesis moves away from the deterministic narration of classic Cypriot historiography. Furthermore, the thesis examines the role of the Turkish Cypriot press in the ethnic transformation of the Turkish Cypriot community. By rereading the press of the conservative and the nationalist elite, I attempt to deconstruct their image and analyze them under the light of social and political events. I attempt, thus, to present them not as two elites that were divided by ideology. Instead, I try to portray them as two groups that used ideology as a means to retain their position, in the case of the traditional elite, or in order to come to power, in the case of the nationalist elite.

**For my parents**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I'd first like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Benjamin Fortna, for his advice but most importantly for his patience all these years, as well as the State Scholarships Foundation of Greece, which provided me with the necessary funding to conduct my doctoral research in London, and the School of Oriental and African Studies, which funded my research in Cyprus and Turkey. I would also like to thank the staff of the State Archives of the Republic of Cyprus, the archives of the Press and Information Office in Nicosia, the State Archives of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and the Başbakanlık Arşivi in Ankara for their help and cooperation.

Special thanks go to Stefano Taglia, Alekos Lamprou, Michalis Iliakis, Yiannis Bonos and Sam Hardy for their advice and support. Antonis Hadjikyriakou provided me with material but also with ideas about the thesis. Ioannis Grigoriadis offered his experience and motivation from the very beginning. Nadia Hadjipolycarpou and Düriye Gökçebağ in Cyprus and Jac Koumi and Haris Noutsos in London offered much more than their hospitality. Ayça Baydar helped me with the bureaucracy in the final stages. I owe a lot to my first history professor, Christina Koulouri, whose contribution during my bachelor years brought me to where I am now, and to Rabia Harmanşah, for motivating me when I most needed it. Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Nikolao and Georgia for their moral and financial support.

**Note on transliteration**

Names and titles in Ottoman Turkish have been rendered in accordance with modern Turkish usage. Arabic terms are transliterated according to a simplified system based on that of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (IJMES). Greek names have been transliterated using the Latin script.

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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

### The object of inquiry

Fikret Halil Alasya, one of the most prominent Turkish Cypriot historians, wrote on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1963 an article entitled “Cyprus and love for Atatürk” (Kıbrıs ve Atatürk Sevgisi). In it we read:

The Turks of Cyprus accepted and applied day by day without any legal obligation all the reforms that the great Atatürk initiated in Turkey. Even if the local government practically obstructed some of the reforms, their principles were implemented and a struggle was undertaken in order to convince the local government to apply them. The alphabet reform, the dress reform, the shutting down of the dervish lodges and secularism were implemented immediately. Even the elderly Turkish women removed their headscarves while the men immediately wore hats and started praying in Turkish and there was a struggle for the implementation of the civil code. This struggle lasted until the 1950s. [...] This demonstrates that the Turks of Cyprus with their culture, mentality, behaviour, in a few words with their being, have safeguarded their existence as an inseparable part of the Turkishness of the motherland. The Turks of Cyprus sincerely accepted the Atatürk reforms and it is possible to understand their loyalty to Atatürk from the sparkle in the eyes of the young and the elderly alike. The Turks of Cyprus are born, raised and die with love for Atatürk.<sup>1</sup>

Almost the whole of Turkish Cypriot historiography agrees that the Turkish Cypriots adopted the Kemalist reforms and embraced Turkish nationalism already from the beginning of the Kemalist revolution. This narration served two purposes: first, it answered the Greek Cypriot argument that the Turkish Cypriots were Islamized Christians and therefore Turkish claims on Cyprus were groundless. Second, it was an appeal to the Turkish government to support a population that was always loyal to the principles of Turkish nationalism. Instead of examining the Turkishness of the Turkish Cypriots, this thesis will try to answer the following questions: Under what conditions did the Turkish Cypriots embrace Turkish nationalism? What was the nature of Turkish Cypriot Kemalism? Were the secularist reforms unanimously accepted? Did the social and ideological transformation of the community create a new elite?

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<sup>1</sup>Halil Fikret Alasya, *Kaleminden Damlalar Cilt 1* (Lefkoşa, 1977), p.77.

How did the old ruling class experience this transformation? Finally, what is the nature of the conflict between the old and the new elite?

The scope of this thesis covers the period from 1918 until 1931. Without disregarding the years that preceded and followed this period, I argue that the events that took place in 1918 and 1931 were crucial for the Turkish Cypriot national struggle and therefore limit the scope of this research. Turkish nationalism among the Turkish Cypriots was active already from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. I argue, however, that it was the collapse of the Empire and the launch of the Kemalist revolution that provided the framework for Turkish nationalism. The establishment of the Turkish Republic and the institutionalization of Turkish nationalism, primarily through education but also through an organized state apparatus made possible the spread of Turkish nationalism first among the Turks in Anatolia and then among the Turkish populations that had remained outside the boundaries of modern Turkey. The Kemalist version of Turkish nationalism had incorporated elements of the ideological currents of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, namely the ideas of Ottomanism and pan-Islamism but due to the novelties it introduced, with secularism being the most important, it was an innovation for a society that was defined until then along religious lines. After 1918 but mainly after 1922, with the consolidation of the Kemalist rule, the Turkish Cypriots entered the era of modernity. What was the procedure of the modernization of the community? Did they embrace the Kemalist principles unanimously and wholeheartedly, as Alasya described in his article? Was there any opposition to the reforms and how was it treated by the nationalists? How long did the modernization process last? How did the Turkish Cypriots see themselves within the transformed public sphere? The answer to these questions will be provided in the core chapters of the thesis.

I decided to limit the scope of the research to 1931. The procedure of consolidation of Turkish nationalism in Cyprus did not end in 1931; it continued until the 1940s. I argue, however, that the autocratic measures that were imposed by the colonial government in 1931 as a response to the Greek Cypriot riots that took place in October of the same year ended the constitutional experiment in Cyprus and removed the opportunity from both communities to

use the representative bodies in order to promote their agenda. After that and until the end of colonial rule the nationalists were obliged to use other means in order to promote their ideas. By 1931 a younger generation of Turkish Cypriots that had been educated in accordance to the principles of Kemalism had already embraced the ideals of Turkish nationalism and it is for this reason that I limit the research to 1931.

Within these thirteen years we witness the transformation of the Turkish Cypriots from a religious to an ethnic community. I'm interested in the procedure of this transformation and the implications it had for the Turkish Cypriots. It was a procedure that caused a debate between the conservative elite of the religious notables that remained loyal to the colonial government and the nationalist elite that struggled to secure the implementation of the Kemalist reforms and make sure that the Turkish Cypriots embraced Turkish nationalism. I argue that the Turkish Cypriot society during that period did not react in a monolithic way towards the changes that were imported from mainland Turkey. The community and its elite consisted of arduous supporters of the Kemalist revolution and people who were skeptical of the reforms. This distinction does not mean that the latter rejected a Turkish identity, as this was now put forward in Kemalist ideology. There were many reasons for this distinction, but I focus mainly on two: The politics of power and the economy. Hence, I approach this debate not as one between the supporters and the adversaries of Kemalism. By looking at other factors such as British colonialism and Greek Cypriot irredentism, I argue that it was not only an ideological debate; it was rather a struggle for power. In that sense, the two elites did not differentiate as much in the sense that they both sought to protect the religious identity of the community. For a community in transition, Islamic identity still played quite an important role.

In examining the ideological transformation of the Turkish Cypriot community the press offers invaluable insight into the thoughts and ideas of the elites. Both parties used the press as the main vehicle of dissemination of their ideas. Quite often the newspaper columns were transformed into the space where the editors and the columnists engaged in a harsh debate in their attempt to establish themselves as the only guardians of the community's

interests. I attempt to analyze the discourse of the press in order to demonstrate the differences and also the similarities between the two elites. By doing this I also highlight the role of the press in the transformation of the community.

### **Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot historiography**

Like almost every other aspect of Cypriot life the Cyprus issue has affected Cypriot historiography too. The division of the two communities along ethnic lines meant that, even now, Cypriot historiography has been unable to produce a common modern history of Cyprus. Undoubtedly, the ethnic origin of the researcher, be that a historian, a political scientist or even an economist, defined the outcome of one's research. In Cyprus, like elsewhere in the Balkans and the Middle East historians cannot decide on the nature of the Ottoman era. For most Greek and Greek Cypriot historians, the Ottoman past is described as a dark age for the Greek people. On the contrary, for Turkish Cypriot historians, the Ottoman administration is presented as a golden age for the Turks of Cyprus. As far as British rule is concerned, Turkish and Greek Cypriot historians appear united but for different reasons. For Turkish Cypriot historians, the colonial administration was regarded as the lesser evil, an obstacle to the Greek Cypriot plans to unite Cyprus with Greece. In the broader picture though, the British administration was portrayed as unfair and oppressive towards the Turkish Cypriots and favourable towards the Greek Cypriots. For most Greek Cypriot historians, the same period is presented as unfair and oppressive towards the Greek Cypriots because the colonial government did not allow the materialization of the *Enosis* plans.

Until recently Greek Cypriot historians produced excellent and analytical works on the history of Cyprus under the British, but in essence these works only narrated the history of the Greek Cypriots under the British. Little or no space was provided to the Turkish Cypriots.

The works of Georghallides are a notable exception.<sup>2</sup> Georghallides examines the period from 1918 to 1931 and, unlike other Greek Cypriot historians, refers to the developments within the Turkish Cypriot community. Nevertheless he does not analyze in detail the ideological debate that took place in the community. The social aspects of the history of Cyprus under British rule were neglected by both Greek and Turkish Cypriot researchers, each for different reasons. For example, mainstream Greek Cypriot historiography until recently neglected the role of the Communist Party of Cyprus, because its leadership chose to oppose the demand for *Enosis*. Hence, it did not fit in the nationalist historical framework that presented a united Greek Cypriot society mobilized to achieve the national goal.<sup>3</sup> Again Georghallides and also Rolandos Katsiaounis are notable exceptions.<sup>4</sup> Turkish Cypriot mainstream historiography, on the other hand, offers limited space to the Communist Party of Cyprus (later renamed AKEL) and Turkish Cypriot participation because the party was dominated by Greek Cypriots and mainstream analysis avoids references to cooperation between the two communities in pre-1974 Cypriot history. On the contrary, there are works in Greek Cypriot historiography published after 1974 that focus on the peaceful coexistence and attempt to play down the intercommunal violence of the pre-1974 period in order to refute the Turkish Cypriot arguments that support the need for two different state entities in Cyprus.

Even British historians like C. W. Orr<sup>5</sup> and George Hill<sup>6</sup> pay more attention to the Greek Cypriots. Greek Cypriot nationalism and the fact that the Greek Cypriots constituted the majority of the population may justify the need for a thorough study of the majority, yet the lack of interest in the Turkish Cypriot community continued until the 1950s. It was only after the 1974 war and the emancipation of the Turkish Cypriots that an increased interest in

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<sup>2</sup> G.S Georghallides, *A Political and Administrative History of Cyprus 1918-1926* (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 1979); *Cyprus and the Governorship of Sir Ronald Storrs* (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 1985).

<sup>3</sup> Stavros Panteli, *A History of Cyprus: From Foreign Domination to Troubled Independence* (London and The Hague: East-West Publications, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Rolandos Katsiaounis, *Labour, Society and Politics in Cyprus during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Nicosia, Cyprus Research Centre, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> C.W.J. Orr, *Cyprus under British Rule* (London: Zeno Publishers, 1972).

<sup>6</sup> George Hill, *A History of Cyprus Vol. 4* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952).

the history of the community was recorded. Among the various works by international scholars on the history of the community under the British, one can distinguish James McHenry's *The Uneasy Partnership on Cyprus*,<sup>7</sup> Hanz Richter's *Geschichte der Insel Zypern 1878-1949*<sup>8</sup> and Rebecca Bryant's *Imagining the Modern*.<sup>9</sup> McHenry's book offer a thorough analysis of the developments within the Turkish Cypriot community, but puts more emphasis on the impact of Anglo-British relations; Richter's book is one of the most detailed works on the history of Cyprus, but the period he covers is too long to be able to refer in detail to the 1920s, the decade when Turkish Cypriot nationalism was consolidated. Finally, Bryant's work is one of the most thorough anthropological analyses of the rise of nationalism among both the Greek and the Turkish Cypriots. As Bryant is more interested in the origins of the Greek and Turkish nationalisms on the island, her work puts less emphasis on the nature of the conflict between the nationalists and the pro-British.

On the latest stages of British rule, the works of Robert Holland, *Britain and the Revolt in Cyprus 1954-1959*, and Diana Weston Markides, *Cyprus 1957-1963 From Colonial Conflict to Constitutional Crisis*, offer a detailed account of the events that led to the independence of Cyprus, although these years do not fall within the scope of this research.

As noted earlier, the Cyprus issue had an impact on the way Turkish historiography dealt with the history of the community. For most Turkish Cypriot historians, the era preceding the 1974 war is presented as a period of uncertainty for the community amidst a struggle to achieve national sovereignty. Hence various works appeared after 1974, often published by the Turkish Cypriot Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sport, which present the Turkish Cypriot community as an ardent supporter of the Kemalist regime. Among the numerous works on the Kemalist reforms and the relations of the Turkish Cypriots

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<sup>7</sup>James McHenry, *The Uneasy Partnership on Cyprus 1919-1939* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987).

<sup>8</sup>Heinz Richter, *Geschichte der Insel Zypern Teil I: 1878-1949* (Mannheim und Möhnesee: Bibliopolis, 2004).

<sup>9</sup>Rebecca Bryant, *Imagining the Modern: The Cultures of Nationalism in Cyprus* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

with Republican Turkey, Mustafa Haşim Altan's *Atatürk Devrimlerinin Kıbrıs Türk Toplumuna Yansıması* (The reflection of Atatürk's reforms on the Turkish Cypriot Community)<sup>10</sup> and Sabahattin İsmail and Ergin Birinci's *Atatürk Döneminde Türkiye-Kıbrıs İlişkileri* (Turkish-Cypriot relations during the Atatürk era) stand out.<sup>11</sup> There are of course works by researchers such as Ahmet An, *Kıbrıs Türk Liderliğinin Oluşması* (The Formation of Turkish Cypriot Leadership), and Nazım Beratlı, *Kıbrıslı Türklerin Tarihi* (The History of the Turkish Cypriots), which offer a more detailed but very analytical view of the history of the Turkish Cypriots under the British.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the relations between the Turkish Cypriots and the colonial government or the Greek Cypriot community cannot be analysed along the lines of rivalry between Greek and Turkish nationalisms or as a struggle between pro- and anti-Kemalist forces. This analysis is too simplistic and ignores other aspects, such as the economy or social relations within the Turkish Cypriot community as well as between the two communities. Another aspect of these works is the adoption of a deterministic historical perception: the period that preceded the 1974 war is presented as a struggle for salvation and national emancipation.

As far as modern researchers are concerned, they have distanced themselves from this analysis. For example, various publications by Turkish Cypriot historian Niyazi Kızılyürek offered a new perspective on the history of the Turkish Cypriots, distinct from the nationalistic approach of the old guard.<sup>13</sup> A new generation of historians has also produced comprehensive investigations. Among them, I would single out Altay Nevzat's doctoral thesis

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<sup>10</sup>Mustafa Haşim Altan, *Atatürk Devrimlerinin Kıbrıs Türk Toplumuna Yansıması* (Ankara: KKTC Milli Eğitim, Kültür, Gençlik ve Spor Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1997).

<sup>11</sup>Sabahattin İsmail and Ergin Birinci, *Atatürk Döneminde Türkiye-Kıbrıs İlişkileri* (Lefkoşa: Akdeniz Haber Ajansı Yayınları, 1989).

<sup>12</sup>Ahmet An, *Kıbrıs Türk Liderliğinin Oluşması (1900-1942)* (Lefkoşa: Galeri Kültür Yayınları, 1997); Nazım Beratlı, *Kıbrıslı Türklerin Tarihi 3. Kitap* (Lefkoşa: Galeri Kültür Yayınları, 1999).

<sup>13</sup>Niyazi Kızılyürek, *Kıbrıs Sorununda İç ve Dış Etkenler* (Lefkoşa: Işık Kitabevi Yayınları, 1983); *Kipros: To Adieksodo ton Ethnikismon* (Athens: Mavri Lista, 1993); *Milliyetçilik Kıskaçında Kıbrıs*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002)

on the emergence of nationalism among the Turks of Cyprus,<sup>14</sup> Eleni Bouleti's thesis on British policy towards the Turkish Cypriots and the emergence of national-Turkish identity<sup>15</sup> and Hüseyin Ağuiçenoğlu's monograph on the portrayal of the motherland in the Turkish Cypriot and the Dobrudja press.<sup>16</sup> Nevzat's work is one of the most comprehensive studies of Turkish Cypriot history. He traces the origins of Turkish Cypriot nationalism in the late Ottoman and early British era. In his research, Nevzat has made extensive use of local archives, such as the *Kardeş Ocağı* records, the Turkish Cypriot Brethren Hearth, as well as Greek and Turkish Cypriot, Turkish, British and American archives. For this reason, I find Nevzat's contribution to the field invaluable. Nevzat covers a quite long period, which extends from the early 19th Century until after the end of the Second World War. His research offers a rich insight in the evolution of Turkish Cypriot nationalism following the evolution of nationalism in the Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey. Being a Turkish Cypriot, Nevzat has a deep understanding of his own community's history. This thorough account of Turkish Cypriot history could include more extensive reference to the limited yet under-researched area of the anti-Kemalist Turkish Cypriots in the 1920s. As I will explain later on in the introduction, the limited yet existing reactions to the Kemalist reforms is an issue that required further analysis. Nevzat correctly notices that the black and white approach of some Turkish Cypriot historians does not allow us to see that some anti-Kemalist figures among the community, including Mehmet Münir, the leader of the pro-English elite, did not refuse his Turkish roots and "refuted charges that he was anti-Turkish".<sup>17</sup> As will be demonstrated later, the same was the case with the Kemalist party. Worry for the state of the community's heritage, and discontent with the centralization of the community's religious

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<sup>14</sup>Altay Nevzat, *Nationalism amongst the Turks of Cyprus* (Unpublished doctoral thesis), (Oulu: University of Oulu, 2005).

<sup>15</sup>Eleni Bouleti, *I aggliki Politiki apenanti stin tourkokipriaki Kinotita 1879-1950. I Poria pros tin Ethnopiisi tis Mousoulmanikis-kipriakis Kinotitas* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis) (Athens: Panteio University, 2008).

<sup>16</sup>Hüseyin Ağuiçenoğlu, *Das "Mutterland" in der Presse der Dobrudscha und der türkischen Zyprioten in postosmanischer Zeit* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2012).

<sup>17</sup>Nevzat, *Nationalism*, p. 287.



institutions, although it was central in the Kemalist agenda, proves that the two factions were not necessarily opposing.

On the other hand, Bouleti's study is one of the few published in Greek. Bouleti did extensive research in the National Archives in London and her work offers a detailed account of the role of the Muslim religious endowments, the *Evkâf*, and the impact that their control by the colonial government had on the emergence of Turkish Cypriot identity throughout British rule. As we shall see, the issue of the control of the *Evkâf* is crucial for the prosperity of the community and Bouleti's research offers valuable insight into developments during the early British period that paved the way for the consolidation of Turkish Cypriot nationalism in the 1920s.

Finally Ağuıçenoğlu's comparative study of the Turkish press in Cyprus and in Dobrudja is one of the few works on the role of the Turkish Cypriot press as an instrument for the consolidation of ties with the mainland Turkey. Although there have been book and journal articles on the Turkish Cypriot press, Ağuıçenoğlu's study is important because he attempts an in-depth analysis of the role of the press.

For the analysis of Greek nationalism I used the works of Elli Skopetea<sup>18</sup> and Thanos Veremis.<sup>19</sup> Since my research is not a comparative study of nationalism in Cyprus, I was interested in tracing the origins of Greek nationalism and the way this was conveyed in Cyprus. As far as Greek Cypriot nationalism is concerned, the articles of Kitromilides,<sup>20</sup> Choisi,<sup>21</sup> Papageorgiou<sup>22</sup>, Sia Anagnostopoulou's edited volume<sup>23</sup> and Kaesar Mavratsas''

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<sup>18</sup>Elli Skopetea, *To "Protipo Vasileio" kai i Megali Idea: Opseis tou Ethnikou Provlímatos stin Ellada (1830-1880)*, (Athens: Politipo, 1988).

<sup>19</sup>John S. Koliopoulos & Thanos M. Veremis, *Greece: The Modern Sequel, From 1821 to the Present*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2004).

<sup>20</sup>Paschalis M. Kitromilides, Greek Irredentism in Asia Minor and Cyprus, *Middle Eastern Studies*. Vol. 26, January 1990, 1.

<sup>21</sup>Jeanette Choisi, "The Greek Cypriot Elite – Its Social Function and Legitimization", *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 7, Spring 1995, 1.

<sup>22</sup>Stefanos P. Papageorgiou, "The Genesis of the Greek and Turkish nationalism in Cyprus, 1878-1914: A Common march at a Different Pace", *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 9, Spring 1997, 1.

monograph<sup>24</sup> were very helpful in analyzing the conditions under which Greek Cypriot nationalism emerged and developed.

In examining Turkish nationalism, the edited volume on Nationalism in the Turkish-language series *Political Thought in Modern Turkey* has been an invaluable tool.<sup>25</sup> For a historical overview of Turkish nationalism, I used Bernard Lewis' *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*,<sup>26</sup> Eric Jan Zürcher's *Turkey, a Modern History*<sup>27</sup> and Hugh Poulton's *Top Hat, Grey Wolf and Crescent*.<sup>28</sup>

For an analysis of Turkish Cypriot society under the British, the work of Salih Egemen is one of the few that refer to the social and financial aspects of the quest for leadership among the Turkish Cypriots.<sup>29</sup> I would also add Bülent Evre's book on the birth and evolution of Turkish Cypriot nationalism<sup>30</sup> and the edited volume on Turkish Cypriot identity in literature.<sup>31</sup> Finally, the biography of Mehmet Necati Özkan helps us understand the evolution of the most prominent Turkish Cypriot statesman and supporter of the Kemalist cause of the era.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Sia Anagnostopoulou (ed.), *The Passage from The Ottoman Empire to the Nation States: A Long and Difficult Process: The Greek Case*. (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2004).

<sup>24</sup>Kaesar Mavratsas, *Opseis tou Ellinikou Ethnikismou stin Kipro: Ideologikes Antiparatheseis kai I Kinoniki Kataskevi tis Ellinokipriakis Tautotitas 1974-1996*, (Athens: Katarti, 1998).

<sup>25</sup>Tanıl Bora (ed.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasî Düşünce: Milliyetçilik* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2002).

<sup>26</sup>Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

<sup>27</sup>Eric Jan Zürcher, *Turkey, a Modern History* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1997).

<sup>28</sup>Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat, Grey Wolf and Crescent: Turkish Nationalism and the Turkish Republic* (London: Hurst and Company, 1997).

<sup>29</sup>Salih Egemen, *Kıbrıslı Türkler Arasında Siyasal Liderlik* (Lefkoşa: Ateş Matbaacılık, 2006).

<sup>30</sup>Bülent Evre, *Kıbrıs Türk Milliyetçi: Oluşumu ve Gelişimi* (Lefkoşa: İşik Kitabevi Yayınları, 2004).

<sup>31</sup>Aydın Mehmet Ali (ed), *Turkish Cypriot Identity in Literature* (London: Fatal Publications, 1990).

<sup>32</sup>Ergin Birinci, *M. Necati Özkan* (Lefkoşa: Necati Özkan Vakfı Yayınları, 2001).

## Overview of primary sources

Research for the thesis was conducted in the State Archive and the Public Record Office of the Republic Of Cyprus, the State Archive of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the *Başbakanlık Arşivi* in Ankara and the National Archives in London. The Turkish Cypriot press constitutes a pivotal part of my primary sources. Although the Turkish Cypriot press in the 1920s was quite active with two newspapers, *Söz* and *Hakikat*, covering the period examined by this research, not all editions of both newspapers are available to the public. The events of 1963-1974 had their toll on the local archives. For the study of the Turkish Cypriot Press, I used the works of Cemalettin Ünlü,<sup>33</sup> Orhan Turan,<sup>34</sup> Bekir Azgın<sup>35</sup> and Martin Strohmeier.<sup>36</sup> The first two are quite detailed and extensive accounts of the Turkish Cypriot press, although they both fall victim to the scarcity of sources on the anti-Kemalist press. Indeed, the lack of sources on the owners and editors of *Hakikat* newspaper limits the possibilities of extensively analyzing the main pro-British newspaper while there are plenty of references on the main pro-Kemalist newspaper, *Söz*.

In certain cases, the Turkish Cypriot press completes the archival material since newspapers reproduced manifestos, speeches, petitions and appeals to the people that are sometimes difficult to find or never made their way into the archives.

At this point I would like to refer to the choice of sources in relation to the existing bibliography. As I mentioned earlier, within the period under research, *Söz* was the only Turkish Cypriot newspaper in continuous publication, from 1923 until 1942. Due to the fact that copies of the newspaper are available in archives, it has been used extensively as a

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<sup>33</sup>Cemalettin Ünlü, *Kıbrıs'ta Basın Olayı*. (Basın –Yayın Genel Müdürlüğü, 1980).

<sup>34</sup>Orhan Turan, *Tarihten Günümüze Kıbrıs Türk Basını (1878-2009)* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2003)

<sup>35</sup>Bekir Azgın, "The Turkish Cypriot Mass Media" in Klaus-Detlev Grothusen, W. Steffani and P. Zervakis (eds.) *Zypern* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1998), pp. 641- 659.

<sup>36</sup>Martin Strohmeier, "The Ottoman Press and the Turkish Community in Cyprus (1891-1931) in Horst Unbehaun (ed.), *The Middle Eastern Press as a Forum for Literature* (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 249-274.

source. Also available are books and articles on its publisher and main columnist, Remzi Okan. Research has been also been done about other newspapers and their publishers such as *Masum Millet* (The Innocent Nation).<sup>37</sup> Yet one of the main newspapers of the period, *Hakikat*, has remained under-researched. There are practical reasons for that: it was published for ten years, from 1923 to 1933; not all of its editions survive in archives; and it continued using the Ottoman alphabet even until 1931. I believe that there is also an ideological reason. The newspaper adopted, as we shall see in chapters three and six, the newspaper adopted a rather cautious approach towards the Kemalist party. Although *Hakikat* articles appear in many works so far, the fact that its criticism of the Kemalist party in 1930 and 1931 did not support the nationalist narrative, has not received enough attention. In a similar way, Mehmet Münir, the delegate of the *Evkâf* and leading figure of the Turkish Cypriot community, is neglected by historians. His openly pro-English stance and the fact that he has been labeled Anglophile are the two main reasons that researchers have neglected him.

The main body of the archives of the colonial government is found in the State Archives of the Republic of Cyprus and the National Archives in London. They include the correspondence of colonial government officials with their superiors in London, memoranda and petitions submitted by Cypriots and newspaper extracts in their original language and in translation. For the analysis of the language of the press, I used sociologist Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*<sup>38</sup>, historian Eric Hobsbawm's *The Invention of Tradition*<sup>39</sup> and Greek sociologist Kirkos Doxiadis's *Nationalism, Ideology, Mass Media*.<sup>40</sup> I was interested in analyzing the language that was applied in the debate between the Kemalist and the pro-government newspapers. While the secular-nationalist rhetoric was imported from Turkey, the two parties cannot be clearly defined in national or religious terms.

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<sup>37</sup> Harid Fedai, *Kıbrıs'ta Masum Millet Olayı*, (Istanbul: KKTC Turizm ve Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları: 1986).

<sup>38</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).

<sup>39</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>40</sup> Kirkos Doxiadis, *Ethnikismos, Ideologia, Mesa Mazikis Epikinonias* (Athens: Plethron, 1995).

As we shall see, both parties refer equally to the national and religious sentiment of the community in order to prevail.

### **Methodological approach and issues**

This thesis examines the transformation of the Turkish Cypriot community from a religious to an ethnic community. I argue that this transformation brought with it significant changes in the everyday life of the Turkish Cypriots, changes that nationalist historiography presents as universally and enthusiastically accepted. Due to the lack of primary sources, tracing the impact of this transformation among the ordinary Turkish Cypriot is not an easy task. Indeed the memoirs of members of the elite, such as Necati Özkan, and the memoirs of teachers reproduce the mainstream Kemalist narrative. In my attempt to reread the transformation process, I found Habermas' theory on the transformation of the public sphere quite useful.<sup>41</sup> I argue that, in Cyprus, there existed simultaneously three different but overlapping public spheres: the Ottoman, the British and the Cypriot. The Ottoman public sphere gradually gave way to the British public sphere with the centralization of the religious institutions. With the emergence of modern Turkey, the public sphere included notions like secularism, modernity and Westernization. The Muslim Cypriot was obliged to become a Turk and in order to do that he was obliged to abandon the characteristics that had until then made him part of the Ottoman domain: religion, dress code and language.

Yael Navaro Yashin claims that, with the foundation of the modern Turkish state, an attempt was made "to define what was culturally native to the new polity" that was "Turkey".<sup>42</sup> Since Westernization was one of the pillars of the new Turkish identity, a new culture, new patterns and new habits were imported from the West. Some of these were not new. There had been an attempt to replace the fez with the European hat and to Turkicize the

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<sup>41</sup>See Habermas, chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>42</sup>Yael Navaro Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p.11.

Ottoman language by removing Arab and Persian elements since the Young Turk era. In Turkey, a state apparatus undertook the responsibility to impose this new culture. Laws were passed, People's Houses (*Halkevi*) were opened for the education and the training of the rural masses in the new culture. The Kemalists in Cyprus lacked these means. They tried to propagate the Kemalist ideals through education and the press. To this end, they needed new symbols, new traditions. I use Eric Hobsbawm's "Invention of Tradition" and Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities" in order to explain the invention and reinvention of Turkish and Turkish Cypriot identity.<sup>43</sup>

In order to do that, I will first look at the content of the Kemalist revolution and the characteristics of Kemalist modernization and Westernization. The revolution first demanded the creation of a new identity, in juxtaposition to the existing, Ottoman identity. The vehicles of the new identity, the space, the language, the religious rituals, the history and/or the folklore had to differentiate themselves from the past. Second, the breaking of the ties to tradition and Islam and the attachment to Western civilization was one of the new regime's main targets. Third, the construction of a national identity as a representation of the Republic of Turkey was imminent. This new Turkish identity would take its place among the Western, civilized nations and would boost the new regime's Westernization policies. Finally, the forging of the idea of a citizen, more importantly of a citizen who was loyal to the principles of Turkishness, was necessary for the unity of the new nation. Apart from the idea of citizenship, other factors that could strengthen national unity were common history, the perception of a common geographical entity and a common language.<sup>44</sup> Further to that, I look at the position of modernization within Kemalism. Kemalism aimed at creating a modern state in Turkey. This would be achieved through the economic, cultural and judicial transformation of state and society. Without economic development through industrialization, and cultural

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<sup>43</sup>See Hobsbawm, chapter 7 and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London – New York: Verso, 2006).

<sup>44</sup> L. Funda Şenol Cantek, "Yaban"lar ve Yerliler: Başkent Olma Sürecinde Ankara (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), pp. 26-7.

development in the form of the creation of rational society through education, the democratization of the political system was not possible. In order for these transformations to be realised, a certain extent of political authoritarianism was necessary. Once this aim had been achieved, transition to democracy was possible.<sup>45</sup>

According to the Kemalist ideology, the Turkish Cypriots, like other Turkish communities in the Balkans, were part of the Turkish nation. The Kemalist ideology offered the necessary tools for the transformation of these communities alongside the Turks in Anatolia. Since Cyprus was administered by Britain, the elements of the Kemalist ideology that addressed the economy and the need for structural changes were not applicable to the Turkish Cypriot case. The secularization policies, though, were the most imminent since their implementation in Cyprus would tie the Turkish Cypriots to the new Turkey. As I have demonstrated, this was of utmost importance due to the insecurity caused by the Greek Cypriot demands. The secular reforms were accepted by the Turkish Cypriots without any state pressure, as was the case in mainland Turkey, for historical and political reasons. First, the British had attempted to modernize the state institutions in Cyprus, although, as we shall see, the modernization of the Muslim religious institutions caused reactions among the Turkish Cypriots. Second, coexistence with a more numerous and more prosperous Greek Cypriot community had instilled the necessity of modernization in the minds of the Turkish Cypriots.<sup>46</sup>

The change, the transformation of the old to the new, was expressed more eloquently than perhaps anything else in the figure of the leader. That figure was the head of the nation, the “only man” (*Tek adam*) Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In mainland Turkey, soon after the establishment of the Republic, the idealization of Atatürk’s charisma and authority paved the way for a cult of personality all across the country.<sup>47</sup> The authoritative nature of the Kemalist

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<sup>45</sup>Levent Köker, “Kemalizm/Atatürkçülük: Modernleşme, Devlet ve Demokrasi” in Ahmet İnsel (ed.) *Kemalizm*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002, pp.97-112.

<sup>46</sup>For the perception of modernity and modernization among the Turkish Cypriots see Bryant, *Imagining the Modern*, chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>47</sup>Cantek, “Yaban”lar, p. 29.

regime and the omnipresence of the leader in the public sphere can explain this cult. Nevertheless, how was this possible in Cyprus too? In order to understand Kemal Atatürk's popularity among the Turkish Cypriots, we must first look at the social and economic conditions of the time. The average Turkish Cypriot was impoverished, indebted to usurers, more often in the case of craft workers and farmers, and worried about the future. Kemal Atatürk embodied hope for a better future for the Turkish Cypriots and, in the absence of a Turkish Cypriot leader, he was seen as the protector and the saviour of the community – not from an enemy, imaginary or real, but from economic and social hardships. Further to that, Atatürk incorporated the two basic motifs of the Kemalist revolution: faith in the new Turkey and commitment to modernization.

The new regime was expressed through its symbols. These symbols dominated the public space: a new flag; a national anthem; and a leader whose portrait, together with those of the heroes of the Turkish War of Independence, could be seen in schools and coffee shops. They came to replace old symbols or were, in the case of the portraits, a novelty for a Muslim society. The Turkish Cypriot that belonged until then to the wider Muslim community, the *ummah*, now imagined himself as part of the Turkish nation. Any customs or habits that were considered unsuitable or even improper for the new culture had to be abolished. Söz explained why the Turkish Cypriots had to learn to wear the hat: "By wearing a hat we shall look alike with our brothers in Turkey as we have no particular difference to them anyway".<sup>48</sup> For Söz, the Turkish Cypriots had to follow the path of Turkey's Turks. For the Turkish Cypriot nationalists, the incorporation of the community into the new Turkey was imminent. The Ottoman Empire had ceased to exist, therefore the Turkish Cypriot community had to follow the path of Republican Turkey, as this was envisaged by Atatürk. As we have seen, however, the pro-government, ruling elite used the same threat in order to convince the Turkish Cypriots to comply with the government's decisions in order to further reduce the

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<sup>48</sup>Hüseyin Mehmet Ateşin, "The Process of Secularization of the Turkish Community (1925-1975)", in Hubert Faustmann & Nicos Peristianis (eds.), *Britain in Cyprus: Colonialism and Post-Colonialism 1878-2006* (Mannheim and Möhnesee: Bibliopolis, 2006), p. 340.



community's autonomy. The dilemma to the Turkish Cypriots was formulated almost in the same way: Do not betray your loyalty to the government or else the community's welfare may be jeopardized.

At the eve of the Kemalist revolution, the Turkish Cypriot elite continued to have good relations with the colonial government. There were two reasons for this. Good relations with the government eased the elite's worries that they would lose the privileges they had enjoyed during Ottoman rule. Furthermore, the Greek Cypriot demands for *Enosis* obliged the Turkish Cypriot elite to maintain good relations with the British in order not to suffer the fate of the Cretan Muslims who had to flee the island after its annexation to Greece. Despite discontent with the government's tight control over the community's institutions, the Turkish Cypriot elite did not question loyalty to the government. With the launch and gradual consolidation of the Kemalist revolution, the Turkish Cypriots began questioning loyalty to the government. As we shall see, this was manifested in the 1930 elections for the Legislative Council.

As was mentioned earlier, the Kemalist reforms were implemented with limited reactions, much more smoothly than in Turkey. Nevzat discusses the emergence of the Kemalist faction in great detail. There arises one question, though. How Kemalist were the Turkish Cypriot Kemalists? As mentioned earlier, the Turkish Cypriots embraced the Kemalist reforms that were easily applicable to the Cypriot case: the dress code, the language and the educational reforms. Since they did not rule the island, they did not have a say in economic policy and neither could they dictate judicial reforms. Therein lies a contradiction of the Kemalist experiment in Cyprus in the 1920s. In 1924, in mainland Turkey, the *Evkâf* was placed under the prime minister's office and a National Law Court Organization Regulation abolished the *Şeriat* courts.<sup>49</sup> The Department of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Müdürlüğü), also placed under the prime minister's office, was responsible for the election of the Mufti. Similar reforms were implemented in Cyprus by the colonial government, yet the

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<sup>49</sup>Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Vol. II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1977), pp. 384-5.

Kemalist faction expressed its strong opposition to these changes. The reason, of course, was that these curtailed the community's independence. As we shall see, the issue of the Mufti and the independence of the *Evkâf* were at the centre of the Turkish Cypriot Kemalist agenda. The Turkish Cypriot Kemalists were against the abolition of the religious institutions and their control by the colonial government. They used Kemalist ideology in order to safeguard the autonomy of the community, but in the same way they rejected one of the main Kemalist principles, that of the secularization of public life. In the same way, the attempt of Kemalist ideology to provide a new historical context, which placed limited importance on the Ottoman past, proved problematic for the Turkish Cypriots, because the legacy of the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus was at the centre of the Turkish Cypriot historical narrative.

The *Evkâfçılar* on the other hand, were the conservative elite, who favoured close ties with the colonial government. They were not conservative in religious or social terms and they cannot be identified as an opposition to Kemalist reformers. As I have already explained, the Turkish Cypriots considered themselves part of the Turkish nation. The Kemalist reforms, though, threatened the leading position of the *Evkâfçılar*. The over-concentration of power in the hands of Mehmet Münir had caused resentment amongst ordinary Turkish Cypriots. Their close relations with the colonial government had secured their position among the Turkish Cypriots and the rising popularity of Kemalist ideas threatened their role. It is difficult to assess whether they were opposed to the reforms. The archives of the colonial government contain only one incident of protest against Kemal Atatürk, as we shall see in Chapter 5. While we cannot talk of opposition to Kemalism among the Turkish Cypriots, the conservative elite openly opposed the election of Necatî Özkan in the Legislative Council in 1930 and the convening of a Turkish Cypriot national congress in the following year. Although it is difficult to estimate the popularity of the conservatives, their views were frequently published in the second-biggest Turkish Cypriot newspaper of the time, *Hakikat*, that according to the Cyprus Blue Book was selling on average a thousand copies per week. This is as much as the main pro-Kemalist *Söz*. The newspaper was accessible to the public mainly through coffee houses. While members of the *Evkâfçılar* used religious references in

order to attack the Kemalists, they did not oppose the abolition of the Turkish Cypriot religious institutions, although this constituted an anti-Islamic practice. We see again a contradiction between ideology and practice among the Evkâfçılar. This, I argue, goes to show that, despite the fact that Kemalist ideology had become popular among the Turkish Cypriots, it was a source of contradictions and discrepancies.

### **The Complicated Story of Modernization**

The issue of modernization was central in Young Ottoman, Young Turk and Kemalist discourse. As we have seen, the Turkish Cypriot elites were also engaged in this discourse. At the centre of the modernization discourse lie Weber's ideas on rationalization. According to Weber, this would be "manifested in the growing calculability and systematic control over all aspects of human life on the basis of general rules and precepts which ruled out appeals to traditional norms or charismatic enthusiasm". This obliged an increasing use of bureaucratic controls instead of traditional loyalties.<sup>50</sup> Together with this idea comes the notion of the citizen in a modern nation state as opposed to the subject, at least until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Taking elements from both the French and the German conception of citizenship, that is the state-centered, assimilative concept versus the ethno-cultural one, the Turkish concept of citizenship required loyalty to the state, which was inseparable from its ideology, which in turn was imposed from above.<sup>51</sup> In other words, Kemalist modernization prepared the loyal citizen who would serve the state and its ideology, freed from the influence of the religion

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<sup>50</sup>Brian Turner, *Weber and Islam* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 151.

<sup>51</sup>Ayşe Kadioğlu, "Citizenship and Individuation in Turkey: The Triumph of Will over Reason", in Gerrit Steunebrink & Evert van der Zweerde (eds.) *Civil Society, Religion and the Nation: Modernization in Intercultural Context: Russia, Japan, Turkey* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), p. 199.

that the regime considered backward and reactionary. There is a rich bibliography on the issue of modernity and many scholars have attempted to analyse the “adventure” of Ottoman and Turkish modernization. Among others, I would distinguish Anthony Smith’s “Nationalism and Modernism”<sup>52</sup> and “Nations and Nationalism in the Global Era”.<sup>53</sup> According to Smith, modern-day nations are based on *ethnie*. I find Smith’s analysis of the *ethnos* as a pre-modern ethno-religious community “that possesses a common ancestry, myths and historical memories, a shared culture, a link to a historic territory and some measure of solidarity”<sup>54</sup> quite relevant to the case of Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots. Based on this analysis, we can argue that Ottoman Turks entered modernity when the transformation from a religious community into an ethnic occurred. In other words, in the minds of the Kemalist reformists, the nation-state could be considered modern while the *Ummah* was pre-modern. This process, of course, was long and it was not completed with the abolition of the Caliphate and the implementation of secular reforms.

It is necessary at this point to look at the aspirations of the Ottoman and Kemalist reformists. The quest for the reform of institutions or the outward appearance of people or the desire for “all things European” dominated the agenda of reform-oriented Ottomans, Young Turks and Kemalists alike.<sup>55</sup> Yet the notion of modernity did not remain the same. The fez, which was abolished in 1925 by Kemal Atatürk for being “an emblem of ignorance, negligence and fanaticism”, had replaced the turban in 1829.<sup>56</sup> It should be remembered that all these attempts to modernize Turkish society regarded a small number of bureaucrats and intellectuals, while ordinary Turks, especially in rural Anatolia, lived a crisis of identity, at least in the first years of the Kemalist regime.<sup>57</sup> The ramifications of Kemalist modernization

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<sup>52</sup>Anthony Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>53</sup>Ibid, *Nations and Nationalism in the Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity University Press, 1995).

<sup>54</sup>Ibid, p. 54.

<sup>55</sup>Reşat Kasaba, “Kemalist Certainties and Modern Ambiguities” in Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (eds.), *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997) p. 24.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p.30.

policies for Turks and non-Turks are discussed in detail in Soner Cagaptay's work on *Islam, Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey*.<sup>58</sup> The replacement of religion with Kemalist ideology and nationalism as a connecting force shaped Turkish society for decades. Cagaptay and Yıldız<sup>59</sup> have dealt extensively with the trials of nation-building. The issues facing the Turkish government though, regarding the assimilation of non-Turkish, non-Muslim citizens, are not applicable in Cyprus. In an attempt to adapt Cagaptay's question of "who is a Turk" in the case of the Turkish Cypriot, instead of asking "who is a Turkish Cypriot", one could ask "what makes a Turkish Cypriot", which is one of the questions this dissertation tries to answer. The presence of the Colonial Government and its policy of centralization of the Turkish Cypriot religious institutions meant that the community had already gone through a forced modernization process. By adopting the Kemalist reforms, they kept in step with the Turks of mainland Turkey – a course that would last for decades. If we try to examine how the Kemalist concept of Turkish citizenship was adopted in Cyprus, we can see that despite the lack of an authoritative state, as in Turkey, the notion of the Turkish citizen was successfully implemented there too. Education gradually instilled loyalty to the Turkish nation and Kemalist ideology in the minds of the younger Turkish Cypriots. Then Kemalist ideology transformed the Turkish Cypriot from a member of a pre-modern community to a member of a modern one, that is, from a member of the *Ummah* to a member of an ethnic community. Using Habermas's distinction between the community and society (*Gemeinschaft* vs *Gesellschaft*) the Turk/Turkish Cypriot did indeed enter modernity in terms of institutions or the dress code but not in terms of becoming an actual citizen of a modern society.<sup>60</sup> The social and political conditions in Cyprus are to blame for this.

We should not forget that, as in Turkey, religion was not totally ousted from the public sphere, since it never ceased to constitute part of the communal identity. While for

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<sup>58</sup>Soner Cagaptay, *Islam, Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey* (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>59</sup>Ahmet Yıldız, *Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001).

<sup>60</sup>Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), p.18 and Tufan Erhürman, *Kıbrıs Türklerin Halleri: Kara Gerçekle Yüzleşme Denemeleri* (Lefkoşa: Işık Kitabevi, 2011), pp. 101-3

Turks in Turkey language was used to define who was a Turk in the early 1930s, by what is described as *Kemalism par Excellence*<sup>61</sup>, for the Turkish Cypriots this was not enough, since their identity was shaped through coexistence with a non-Muslim community. Hence, modernity for the Turkish Cypriots had two sources: the British Colonial Government on the one hand and Turkey on the other. And this, as we shall see, manifests the peculiarity of the Turkish Cypriot case. The community's religious institutions had already been centralized by the Colonial Government with the pretext of modernization. Yet, despite the zeal that the Turkish Cypriots demonstrated in implementing the secular reforms, they never ceased to demand that the government handed the administration of the institutions over to the community, since they were essential for its existence.

Finally, reference should be made to the nature of Turkish Cypriot Islam. In the period under research, this topic has not been investigated thoroughly. In an article published in 1957, Charles Beckingham maintained that "Cypriot Islam [was] in general latitudinarian" and that there was no "fanaticism".<sup>62</sup> The insular character of Cyprus and the long coexistence with a Christian majority may have contributed to this end. Nevertheless, as we shall see later on, this cannot explain the high rate of approval of the secular reforms nor the mild attitude towards the Colonial Government.

### **What's in a name? Muslims of Cyprus or Turkish Cypriots?**

In referring to the Turkish Cypriot community in the period before the 1920s, the following question occurs: should one choose the term "Turkish Cypriots", which defines the ethnicity of the community, or is it more appropriate to use the term "Turks of Cyprus", which places more emphasis on the Turkish rather than the Cypriot origin of the community? Or should one use the term "Muslim community of Cyprus", which was preferred by the

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<sup>61</sup>Cagaptay, *Islam*, p.44

<sup>62</sup>Charles Fraser Beckingham, "Islam and Turkish Nationalism in Cyprus", *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol.5, 1/2, 1957, p. 80.

colonial government? The term “Turkish Cypriots” is a neologism. Its use in official documents is recorded in the late 1940s, when the debate about the future of the island began and the British government realized that it could no longer insist on defining the two communities using religious terms. The term was not used either in Turkish (Kıbrıslı Türk) or in Greek (Τοσρκοκύπριοι). The Turkish Cypriots used the term “Turks of Cyprus” (Kıbrıs Türkü) or “Turks” (Türkler) when referring to themselves. The term “Islamic community of Cyprus” (Kıbrıs Ahali İslamiyesi or Kıbrıs Cemiyet-i İslamiye) was also used by the nationalist and the pro-British elite alike. Nationalists, however, chose to use the ethnic term “Turkish Community of Cyprus” (Kıbrıs Türk Cemaatı) in order to emphasize the ethnic rather than the religious character of the community, in accordance with the secularist reforms that had been initiated in Turkey. The colonial government, on the other hand, insisted on the use of the terms “Mohammedan” and “non-Mohammedan” when referring to the Turkish and the Greek Cypriots respectively.<sup>63</sup> The use of non-ethnic terms served the government’s policy to define Turkish and Greek Cypriots as religious communities. I chose to use the term “Turkish Cypriots”, although it is an anachronism for the period of the research, because it avoids any identification with political or religious currents of thought regarding the community.

In a similar way, the use of the term “minority” poses some methodological issues. In the period under research, the Turkish Cypriots were a minority in numerical terms, but they rejected their “minoritization”, as that could lead to a loss of rights and privileges inherited from the Ottoman era. In that sense, I prefer to use the term “community” instead of the term “minority” and, whenever the latter is used, I mean it in the numerical rather than the political sense.

Another issue occurs with the surnames of Turkish Cypriots and Turkish personalities who are mentioned in this study. According to the Surname Law that was introduced in

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<sup>63</sup>SA1 1178/26, 7. In a dispatch to the Colonial Office the terms “Mohammedan” and “non-Mohammedan” in reference to the members of the Legislative Council are described as “inexpedient”. Instead, the terms “Mohammedan” and “Greek Christian” were proposed.

Turkey in 1935, Turkish Cypriots too, like all of Turkey's Turks, adopted surnames. This means that, in the period that I am researching, the titles *bey* and *paşa* (mister and general respectively) were still used. With the Surname Law, Mısırlızade Necati Bey adopted the surname Özkan, while Mustafa Kemal Paşa adopted the surname Atatürk. I chose to use the surnames as well for reasons of clarity.

The names of the opposing Turkish Cypriot elites is another issue that needs clarification. I tried to avoid the use of the terms “conservative” and “liberal” or “progressive” because, I argue, the Cypriot political system under the British was at the threshold of modernity and these terms are not applicable. Instead I chose the terms that were used in the press at the time. The pro-government elite around Münir Bey were named *evkâfçılar* (supporters of the *Evkâf* policy of the colonial government) and *İngilizci* (pro-English). On the other hand, the terms *Muarızlar* (opponents) and *Halkçılar* (populists) were used to refer to the nationalist elite. I use the terms Kemalists and Nationalists because, I argue, they are more representative than the Turkish terms.

## **Chapter Organization**

This thesis consists of five main chapters alongside the introductory chapter and the concluding remarks. Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of Turkish Cypriot history until 1918. This chapter also discusses the evolution of nationalism among the Turkish Cypriots and demonstrates the impact of Greek and Turkish nationalisms on the emergence of Turkish Cypriot identity. Chapter 3 explores the influence of the press on Turkish Cypriot politics and society through the comparison of two prominent newspapers, the nationalist *Söz* and the conservative *Hakikat*. Chapter 4 compares the cases of Necati Özkan, the leader of the nationalist party, and Münir Bey, the head of the *Evkâf* and unofficial leader of the Turkish Cypriots. Chapter 5 discusses the emergence of the Kemalist elite and its conflict with the conservative elite and the colonial government. The chapter deals with the issue of the Turkish Cypriot religious institutions and their control by the colonial government and



explains why this was a cause of discontent for the nationalists. Through this comparison, I will show the balance of power within the Turkish Cypriot elite and I will demonstrate the dimensions of the conflict between nationalists and the *Evkâfçılar*. This chapter also includes the first case study, the 1930 elections for the Legislative Council and their significance for the struggle for power among the elite. Chapter 6 will present the second case study, that of the conflict over the administration of the Lycée, the highest Turkish Cypriot educational institution. In order to achieve this, the chapter examines the characteristics of Turkish Cypriot education, its evolution under British rule and the reasons behind the struggle for control over the Lycée administration. This chapter will demonstrate how education was used for the dissemination of nationalism and how it shaped Turkish Cypriot national identity. Chapter seven deals with the final case study, that of the National Congress in 1931, which was organized by the nationalists. The chapter examines the significance that the Congress had for Turkish Cypriot nationalism through the writings of the Kemalist press and the reactions of the *Evkâfçılar* through the commentary of the conservative press. The National Congress was a demonstration of power on behalf of the Kemalist party – and a proof that the Kemalists had consolidated their power within the Turkish Cypriot community despite the fact that the resolutions adopted were disregarded by the colonial government. Furthermore, the chapter examines the impact of the October 1931 disturbances for the Kemalist movement. Although the 1931 disturbances form the chronological limit for this study, the chapter examines the aftermath of the revolt and the impact that the suspension of all political activity had on Turkish Cypriot politics. Finally, the chapter will briefly discuss the evolution of Turkish Cypriot nationalism after 1931, in order to demonstrate the importance of the 1920s for the emergence of the national identity of the Turkish Cypriot community.

### **Contribution to the field**

While there is a rich bibliography on Cyprus, until recently, the inter-war period had been neglected by researchers. The existing works dedicate little space to the history of the

Turkish Cypriot community under the British. Hence, a comprehensive history of the Turkish Cypriot community under the British has yet to be written. As we have seen earlier in this chapter, Altay Nevzat's doctoral thesis is one of the few works that focus exclusively on the Turkish Cypriots. On the other hand, there are plenty of works in Turkish, but most of them, as I explained in the literature review, approach the history of the community under colonial rule in a deterministic way. I argue, in other words, that these works present the transformation of the Turkish Cypriot community from an Ottoman Muslim community to an ethnic Turkish minority in the light of the events of 1960-1974. The adoption of the Kemalist reforms is presented as universal and their implementation by the community as smooth and unproblematic. By using newspaper articles and archival documents that have not been used before, I attempt to reread the history of the ideological transformation of the Turkish Cypriot community, looking not so much at the inevitability of this procedure but rather at the implications on a social and political level. I try to demonstrate that the Kemalist revolution created ideological debates within Turkish Cypriot society and that the dispute between the Kemalists and the pro-English was not only ideological. In the process of the research, the following questions arose: Why has the literature neglected certain political figures and newspaper titles of the period? What was the nature of the political factions that competed for the leadership of the community? What was the role of the economy in the shaping of the Turkish Cypriot opposition to the colonial government and the conservative elite?

As far as the press is concerned, it has been used by other studies too, but I examine the role of the press in ideological transformation. For this reason, I attempt a comparison between the two newspapers that support the two elites and a discourse analysis. Through the analysis of the editorials, I examine the political and ideological views of the two elites and their vision for the future of the community. By doing that, I prove that the division of the two parties along ideological lines is not accurate, as both had a lot in common and the essence of the debate was the control of the community. While examining the press, the following questions arose: Why did the pro-Kemalist press so keenly promote Turkish Cypriot migration to mainland Turkey? How was the conflict between the pro-Kemalist and the

conservative faction depicted in the press and to what extent was this an ideological struggle between members of the Turkish Cypriot elite? As a result of this analysis, relations between the elite and the Turkish Cypriot lower and middle classes are demonstrated too.

## **CHAPTER 2 – THE TURKISH CYPRIOT ELITE: ITS LEGITIMATION, ROLE AND LIMITATIONS**

### **The Turkish Cypriots and the colonial framework**

This thesis examines aspects of the history of the Turkish Cypriot community under British rule. British rule in Cyprus began in 1878, at a time when the Ottoman Empire was losing territories in the Balkans and many Ottoman Turkish populations were coming under the administration of Christian nations as the once Ottoman provinces were incorporated into the newly independent Balkan states. With the exception of the Iraqi Turkmens, the Turkish Cypriots were the only Ottoman Turkish community that came under the administration of a colonial, Christian power. After 1923, Turkish communities in the Balkans remained outside the boundaries of the Republic of Turkey, such as the Turks of Bulgaria or the Turks of Western Thrace in Greece. Yet they came under the rule of Christian nation states that had experienced Ottoman rule and these Turkish communities had now become minorities, having been the ruling element under the Ottomans. In this sense, the Turkish Cypriots constitute an exceptional case in the history of the Ottoman Turkish populations of the period between 1878 and 1923 – in other words, from the beginning of the territorial shrinkage of the Empire until the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. In order to examine the colonial framework, I will look into another case of a Muslim community that came under British rule in that period, namely that of the Palestinians.

British administration of Cyprus can be divided into two periods: the first dates from the transfer of power by the Ottomans to the British in 1878 until 1914, when Britain annexed the island, while the second period dates from 1915 until 1960, with the end of British rule and the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus. The first period is marked by the ambiguity of the status of the island. According to the first article of the 1878 convention signed by Britain and the Ottoman Empire, the island was “to be occupied and administered by England” in return for England’s commitment to defend the Empire “if Batoum, Ardahan, Kars, or any of them shall be retained by Russia and if any attempt shall be made at any future

time by Russia to take possession of any further territories of his Imperial Majesty the Sultan in Asia". In the seventh article, however, it was stated that "if Russia restores to Turkey Kars and the other conquests made by her in Armenia during the last war, the island of Cyprus will be evacuated by England and the convention of the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 1878 will be at an end".<sup>64</sup> The island was ceded to Britain, but it was still Ottoman territory. For instance, Cypriot merchants continued to fly the Ottoman flag until 1912, which reflected the *de jure* status of the island.<sup>65</sup> Until the First World War, there were voices questioning the use of Cyprus for Britain.<sup>66</sup> This ambivalent stance had a direct effect on the attitude of the Cypriots towards the British: on the one hand, the Greek Cypriots were happy to see Ottoman rule replaced by that of a European, Christian administration, but the British were only considered a step towards *Enosis* with Greece. The Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, saw this change as temporary and kept their allegiance to the Sultan. One thing was for sure: the locals, Muslims or Christians, had no identification with Britain.<sup>67</sup>

According to the second article of the convention, the British would preserve the *Şer-i Mahkeme*, the Religious Courts, while the *Evkâf* would be administered by a Turkish Cypriot and a delegate appointed by the British government. The British kept the Ottoman administrative frame intact. Their reluctance to disturb the *status quo* is displayed in the instructions given to the first High Commissioner, Garnet Wolseley, to "govern Cyprus along Turkish lines, as far as possible, and to make the Sultan and his pashas feel that in conceding us the privilege of governing any of the Asia Minor provinces, no violent disturbance of Turkish laws or customs would be attempted".<sup>68</sup> That Cyprus was still attached to the Porte was proven also by the payment of an annual tribute by the British to the Ottoman treasury.

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<sup>64</sup>C.W.J Orr, *Cyprus under British Rule* (London: Zeno Publishers, 1972), pp. 36-38.

<sup>65</sup>Diana Markides, "Cyprus 1878-1925: Ambiguities and Uncertainties" in Hubert Faustmann and Nicos Persitani (eds.) *Britain in Cyprus: Colonialism and Post-Colonialism 1878-2006* (Manhheim und Möhnesee: Bibliopolis, 2006), p.19

<sup>66</sup>Andrekos Varnava, "Cyprus is of no use to anybody: The Pawn, 1878-1915", in Faustmann and Persitani, *Britain in Cyprus*, p.47.

<sup>67</sup>Markides, "Cyprus", p. 20.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

An annex to the convention required that Britain paid the Empire the excess of revenue over expenditure in Cyprus. In reality, this money was used to pay the shareholders of an Ottoman Loan of 1855, so actually it never reached Istanbul.<sup>69</sup> Although the payment of the tribute was regarded by the Turkish Cypriots as a proof of the Empire's sovereignty over Cyprus, the fact that it was their taxes that paid the tribute was a source of discontent.

Cyprus was not declared a colony until 1925. Despite British hesitation, the island was gradually incorporated into the British colonial framework and, by the turn of the century, Ottoman sovereignty became only nominal. With the rise in power of a liberal government in Britain, legislation for proportional representation was introduced at an island and municipal level, increased funding was allocated to schools and the first newspapers appeared. Proportional representation put an end to Turkish Cypriots' status as the ruling element. The liberal reforms benefited the Greek Cypriots whose elite had already been exposed to Greek nationalism and who had the necessary financial means to publish newspapers and run schools. The reluctance of the British to impose tight control on the curriculum and the appointment of teachers played a crucial role in the rise of nationalism among Greek Cypriots and would later play such a role among Turkish Cypriots, as we shall see in chapter 6. This, too, can be attributed to British unwillingness to implement a policy of Anglicisation given the ambiguous status of the island.<sup>70</sup> The gradual radicalization of Greek nationalism in Cyprus and the demand for *Enosis* was another factor that contributed to the peculiar character of Cyprus as a British colony.<sup>71</sup> In all, the uncertainty regarding the status of the British administration, the demand of the majority of the population to unite with a neighbouring state and the skeptical attitude of the minority differentiated Cyprus not only from other insular colonies, but most importantly from other British colonies in the Middle East.

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<sup>69</sup>Orr, *Cyprus*, p. 48.

<sup>70</sup>Markides, "Cyprus", p. 27.

<sup>71</sup>Robert Holland and Diana Markides, *The British and the Hellenes: Struggles for Mastery in the Eastern Mediterranean 1850-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 187.

As we shall see later on in this chapter, the impact of Islam and the nature of political currents in the Ottoman Empire, namely the theories of Ottomanism and pan-Islamism, delayed the emergence of Turkish nationalism. This explains the Turkish Cypriots' awkward reaction towards the British administration. The temporary character of British rule, together with Greek Cypriot irredentism, limited the reactions of the Turkish Cypriot elite. The Turkish Cypriot elite chose to side with the British administration in order to secure the fate of the community, especially as the Ottoman Empire disintegrated during and after the end of the First World War. A new, Kemalist-oriented elite emerged in the 1920s and questioned this alliance, but it failed to organize the nationalist powers under a political party. The first Turkish Cypriot political party was founded in 1943, under the name KATAK (*Kıbrıs Adası Türk Azınlık Kurumu* – Association of Turkish Minority of the Island of Cyprus).<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, the first Greek Cypriot party, the Communist Party of Cyprus, was founded in 1926. The late appearance of political parties in Cyprus was an outcome of the measures that were implemented by the colonial government after the 1931 riots.<sup>73</sup>

If we draw a parallel with Mandatory Palestine, another case of British colonialism in the region, we observe some interesting similarities. The British in Cyprus attempted to control the Turkish Cypriot community by centralizing the Muslim institutions and placing them under government supervision.<sup>74</sup> In Palestine, in 1921, the mandatory government established the Supreme Muslim Council, which was intended to manage religious affairs, the Muslim religious endowments and Islamic law.<sup>75</sup> In Cyprus, the British converted the Office of Religious Endowments (*Evkâf*) into a government institution and approved the appointment of Münir Bey, a Turkish Cypriot lawyer who soon became indispensable to the

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<sup>72</sup>Niyazi Kızılyürek, "The Turkish Cypriots from an Ottoman-Muslim Community to a National Community" in Faustmann & Peristianis, *Britain in Cyprus*, p. 323.

<sup>73</sup> See Chapter 7.

<sup>74</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>75</sup>Weldon C. Mathews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation: Arab Nationalists and Popular Politics in Mandate Palestine* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 30.

colonial government.<sup>76</sup> In Palestine, the British appointed as the president of the Supreme Muslim Council, a combination of the offices of the chief Mufti of Jerusalem and the president of the Shari'ah Court of Appeals<sup>77</sup>, Amin al- Husayni, a younger brother of the recently deceased Mufti of Jerusalem.<sup>78</sup> Unlike Münir Bey, al Husayni was an Arab nationalist, but his appointment as president of the Council made him an employee of the British administration and brought his family, an influential family of Jerusalem, under direct British influence.<sup>79</sup>

After his election to the Legislative Council of Cyprus, Mehmet Münir became the Turkish *milletbaşı*, the head of the community.<sup>80</sup> At the time that Mehmet Münir's multiple posts had become a source of discontent among the community, Ronald Storrs had been appointed Governor of Cyprus.<sup>81</sup> When he commented on al-Amin that he "regards himself as the elected millet-bashi of the Moslems of Palestine for all purposes" a few years earlier, he had done so as the governor of Jerusalem and Judea.<sup>82</sup>

In both Cyprus and Palestine, the local governments tried to control the Muslim populations and hinder the rise of nationalism by appointing respectable members of the communities to the *Evkâf* and the Supreme Muslim Council. This policy can be traced back through the history of British colonialism in India, Egypt and the Sudan. But it wasn't an issue that troubled only British colonial governments. The Russians, the Dutch and the Austrians in their respective colonies faced the issue of ruling Muslim populations.<sup>83</sup> The

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<sup>76</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>77</sup> Mathews, *Confronting*, p. 30.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> The term *Milletbaşı* originates from the Ottoman system of administration of the various religious communities (*Millet*) of the Empire. *Milletbaşı* then means the head of the community who used to be a member of the clergy, for example the Greek Orthodox patriarch as far as the Orthodox Christian community was concerned. Mehmet Münir was considered by the British the head of the Turkish Cypriot community since he was not elected but appointed to almost all his posts by the Colonial Government.

<sup>81</sup> Ronald Storrs served as Governor of Cyprus from 1920 to 1926.

<sup>82</sup> Mathews, *Confronting*, p.33.

<sup>83</sup> Uri M. Kupferschmidt, *The Supreme Muslim Council: Islam Under the British Mandate for Palestine* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), p. 6.



centralization or abolition of Muslim institutions shows that the British did not believe that these institutions could be successfully reformed or had no intention of interfering with the Religious Courts. Moreover in Palestine, as in Cyprus, they intervened in the *Evkâf* administration in order to stop financial abuse by the trustees.<sup>84</sup>

### **The Development of nationalisms in Cyprus during late Ottoman and early British rule**

Nationalism among the Turkish Cypriots appeared later than Greek nationalism among the Greek Cypriots. This can be attributed to the late emergence of Turkish nationalism due to the religious and social structure of the Ottoman Muslim communities. Turkish nationalism in Cyprus inevitably emerged as a response to Greek irredentism. In order to examine the nature of Turkish nationalism in Cyprus, we shall look at the development and the characteristics of Greek and Turkish nationalisms and how they influenced Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalisms respectively.

### **Greek Nationalism: From *Megali Idea* to the Greek–Turkish war of 1919-1922 and beyond**

Greek historiography takes pride in the early emergence of Greek nationalism in the Ottoman domains. The Greeks may not have been the first to revolt against the Ottomans, since the Serbian uprising of 1804 preceded the Greek revolution of 1821. Nevertheless, the outcome of the Greek revolution was successful – with the support of Britain, France and Russia – in that it established an independent Greek state in the southern tip of the Balkan Peninsula in 1830. Despite the arduous work of Rhigas Feraios,<sup>85</sup> a bright and energetic Greek

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p.11.

<sup>85</sup>Koliopoulos & Veremis, *Greece*. pp. 215-20.

intellectual, to promote the idea of a Hellenic Republic in the territories controlled by the Ottoman Empire that would encompass all nations and religions under the auspices of the Greeks, the newly established Greek state was unable to promote this idea – not necessarily because of the nature of Greek nationalism, but also due to the fact that the other Balkan nationalisms did not envisage the replacement of the Ottoman Empire through a Greek state. Soon, Greek nationalism was strangled within the narrow limits of the Greek Kingdom. The coexistence of various national groups who spoke languages other than Greek and did not belong to the Christian Orthodox dogma (Albanians, Vlachs and Slavs to name a few) required a unifying factor, one that could deny some European arguments that modern Greeks had nothing to do with Ancient Greeks. Greek historians Paparrigopoulos and Zambelios presented a theory of the historical and cultural continuity of the Greek nation from antiquity until modern times.<sup>86</sup> This theory became the cornerstone of Greek historiography for decades and the backbone of the *Megali Idea*, the great idea of Greek nationalism that envisaged the unification of all territories in the Balkans and in Anatolia that were inhabited by Greek-speaking, Orthodox Christian populations.

The term *Megali Idea* can be attributed to Ioannis Kolettis, a Greek politician who served as prime minister twice and played an important role in the politics of the Greek Kingdom for almost two decades after its establishment.<sup>87</sup> According to Elli Skopetea, author of one of the most comprehensive monographs on the issue, the *Megali Idea* went through three stages: during the first stage, Istanbul was considered the national centre and the vision was an Eastern or Greek Empire. In the second stage, which began with the incorporation of the Ionian Islands into Greece, Athens became the national centre and the aim was to increase the boundaries of the state while, in the third stage, towards the 1870s, there was an attempt to

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>87</sup>Skopetea, *To Protipo*, p. 257.

compromise the impact of Athens and Istanbul with the theory of Helleno-Ottomanism<sup>88</sup> (Ελληνοοθωμανισμός) after the change in the status of the Greeks of the Empire.<sup>89</sup>

*Megali Idea* was a vague vision, the fulfillment of which was beyond the means of a small and impoverished state. Moreover, the social and political progress of the Greek state was hindered by the populist *Megali Idea* that had meanwhile been embraced by almost all political parties. Greece did expand territorially in 1864, as we have seen, and then in 1881 when Thessaly was ceded by the Ottomans under the Treaty of Berlin. With the Balkan Wars and First World War, Greece expanded again, gaining Epirus, Macedonia, Crete and the Eastern Aegean Sea islands. With the Treaty of Sèvres, parts of western Anatolia were given to the Greek state to be administered until the population decided on the future status of the area in a referendum. The Greek-Turkish war of 1919-1922 put an end to the *Megali Idea*, as the Greek state had to face the task of accommodating the refugees who arrived from Anatolia after an exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey was decided at Lausanne. Hence, when Prime Minister Venizelos was asked by the Greek consul in Cyprus to support the Greek Cypriot elite against the British, he condemned the diplomat's activities and warned against the use of violence.<sup>90</sup>

### **Nationalism among the Greek Cypriots – *Enosis* at any cost?**

Like in other insular provinces of the Ottoman Empire, in Cyprus too the Millet system provided a safe environment for the flourishing of the Orthodox Church. Profiting

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<sup>88</sup>Helleno-Ottomanism replaced or complemented the *Megali Idea* after its shortcomings became evident in the 1860s. The rise of a new elite of Istanbulite Greeks and the Tanzimat reforms convinced Athens that there could be some sort of a cooperation between Greece and the Ottoman Empire. For more information see: Evangelos Kechriotis, "Greco Ottomanism", *Εγκυκλοπαίδεια Μείζονος Ελληνισμού*, Κωνσταντινούπολη, URL <http://constantinople.ehw.gr/Forms/fLemmaBodyExtended.aspx?lemmaID=11376> (Accessed 12/8/2014)

<sup>89</sup>Skopetea, *To Protipo*, pp. 269-70.

<sup>90</sup>For more information on Venizelos and the Cyprus issue see: Yiannis Pikros, "Ο Venizelos kai to Kypriako Zitima" in Odisseas Dimitrakopoulos & Thanos Veremis (eds.) *Meletimata Giro apo ton Venizelo kai tin Epohi tou* (Athens: Ekdoseis Filippoti, 1980), pp. 173-308.

from the privileges granted by Istanbul, the Church of Cyprus grew to be one of the major land-owners on the island and the Archbishop became the leader of the Orthodox millet – *Milletbaşı* in Turkish, *Ethnarch* in Greek. The vision for the revival of the Byzantine Empire had remained alive through folk songs and, when the Greeks in the Peloponnese revolted, the Greek Cypriot uprising was brutally suppressed and members of the clergy were executed, including the archbishop. After 1830, the independent Greek state functioned as the national centre that propagated the ideas of Greek nationalism and of course the *Megali Idea*.<sup>91</sup> Once the Greek state established its educational institutions, teachers educated in Athens were dispatched to schools in Anatolia and Cyprus, teaching Greek culture in standard modern Greek, thus linguistically unifying the Greek-speaking populations. According to Kitromilides, “the educational effort of the nineteenth century promoted the linguistic homogenization of the Christian Orthodox populations of the East, as the basis of their incorporation into the broader community of the Greek nation”.<sup>92</sup> In the years following the establishment of the Greek Kingdom, conditions in Cyprus were not ripe for the expression of Greek nationalism. The arrival of the British in 1878 provided a fertile ground for the flourishing of national sentiment. This was evident in the words of Archbishop Sofronios II, as he welcomed the first British administrator, Sir Garnet Wolseley on July 12, 1878: “We adopt the change of Government inasmuch as we trust that Great Britain will help Cyprus, as it did the Ionian Islands, to be united with mother Greece, with which it is nationally connected”.<sup>93</sup> The words of the archbishop describe in the most eloquent way the nature of Greek nationalism in Cyprus. The end of Ottoman rule and “the predominance of the Greek element resulted in an oversight even oblivion of the existence of a Muslim community in the island”.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Papageorgiou, “The Genesis”, p. 58.

<sup>92</sup>Kitromilides, “Greek Irredentism”, p. 7.

<sup>93</sup>C.W.J. Orr, *Cyprus Under British Rule* (London: Zeno Publishers, 1972), p. 160.

<sup>94</sup>Kitromilides, “Greek Irredentism”, p.13.

With the support of the Church of Cyprus and members of the entrepreneurial elite, soon after the beginning of British rule, the first newspapers in Greek were launched, sport and literary clubs were inaugurated – such as the Gymnastic Association “Pancypria”, founded in Nicosia in 1894 – and great emphasis was given to education with the number of schools rising significantly within the first twenty years of British administration. The Greek Cypriot elite engaged enthusiastically in the spread of Greek nationalism. As the Ottoman Empire was gradually losing power and territories and Greece kept expanding, the ideal of *Enosis* seemed feasible and the members of the Legislative Council attempted to put forward the issue of autonomy or union with Greece repeatedly with petitions, memoranda and appeals to the British government. Until 1931, the Board of Greek Cypriot Education, the highest school authority, decided, together with the Greek Ministry of Education in Athens, on the appointment of teachers, the curriculum and the textbooks. Most of the teachers were either Greeks or Greek Cypriots who had studied in Greek universities and were paid by the Greek Ministry of Education through the Greek Consulate.<sup>95</sup> The members of the Board were the Archbishop, three persons elected by the Greek Cypriot members of the Legislative Council, six persons elected by the respective district committees and a representative of the colonial government.<sup>96</sup> The Church of Cyprus dominated the Board of Education and the subcommittees in the provinces and the villages and in this way prevented the appointment of members who lacked Hellenistic enthusiasm.<sup>97</sup> As noted earlier, the nature of Greek nationalism in Cyprus was such that it was impossible to accommodate the Turkish Cypriot community. Especially after the end of the First World War, Greek territorial expansion caused waves of enthusiasm among the Greek Cypriots and created hope that *Enosis* could be achieved. Despite the fact that the *Megali Idea* was buried in Anatolia after the Greek army was defeated by the Kemalist forces, Greek nationalism in Cyprus only temporarily lost ground. The economic crisis of 1930, combined with the maximalist demands of the Greek

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<sup>95</sup>Choisi, “The Greek Cypriot Elite”, pp. 55-56.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p.55.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

Cypriot elite and the nationalist fervour cultivated in schools, led to an uprising against the British in 1931. It should be noted here that this uprising took place under the leadership of persons who were acting contrary to the wishes of the Venizelos government in Athens and who could not be controlled by either the Greek government or any other force.<sup>98</sup> The measures that the colonial government took in order to limit the influence of the nationalists only managed to delay the outbreak of violence for about a quarter of a century. In 1955, the Greek Cypriots, despite the inability and hesitation of the Greek government, launched a guerrilla war against the British. The continued disregard of the presence of a Turkish Cypriot community on the island did not serve Greek Cypriot interests in the long run. The immediate result of this negligence was the emergence of Turkish Cypriot nationalism.

### **Turkish Nationalism – From Abdülhamid and the Young Turks to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the making of Modern Turkey**

Nationalism was undoubtedly one of the factors that precipitated the fall of the Ottoman Empire. It was also the factor that shaped the face not only of modern Turkey but also of the area that used to be covered by the Empire, namely the Balkans and the Middle East. Greek and Serbian nationalisms were the first to demand and obtain, with the support of Western powers, their independence from the Empire. The territorial losses, however, were not the greatest threat to the Ottoman Empire. The rise of nationalism among the Christian populations in the Balkans and in Anatolia and the protection of the minorities were used as an excuse for continuous interventions in the internal affairs of the Ottoman state from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century until the outbreak of the First World War. The *tanzimat* reforms were planned and implemented in order to improve the circumstances of the minorities, promising equal rights for all subjects of the Sultan. The reforms did improve the

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<sup>98</sup>Pikros, *O Venizelos*, pp. 280-81.

position of the Christian populations, but that whetted the appetites of their respective elites for more rights. With the rise of nationalism, the *millet* system that had served the Empire for four centuries had evolved into a threat to the integrity of the Ottoman state.<sup>99</sup>

The Muslim elites' reaction to the *tanzimat* reforms came in the 1870s, through a group called Young Ottomans. One of the main Young Ottoman intellectuals, Namik Kemal, wrote extensively on the term *vatan*, fatherland.<sup>100</sup> In an attempt to answer the challenge posed by Balkan nationalisms, he emphasized the idea of Ottoman patriotism, although he made no distinction between Ottoman Turks, Arabs or Persians. Although the Christian *Millet* has long ceased to be perceived in religious terms after the rise of Balkan nationalisms, the Muslim millet did not differentiate a Turk from an Arab. This paved the way for the institutionalization of pan-Islamism under Sultan Abdülhamid. Seeing that Ottomanism had not succeeded in preventing the further radicalization of the Christian populations, especially in the Balkans – and faced with successive defeats by the Russians, foreign intervention and the bankruptcy of 1875 – Abdülhamid came to power in 1876 with a plan to unite the faithful elements of the Empire under a pan-Islamic vision and an autocratic administration in order to control the centrifugal forces. According to Lewis, “the task was to drive out the foreign invaders, abolish foreign concessions and immunities, restore the true Islamic faith – and, to reunite all the Muslims in a single state, under its lawful sovereign, the Caliph”.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Until the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century the main *Millets* apart from the Muslim were the Christian and the Jewish ones. With the exception of the Armenians the majority of the Ottoman Christian populations belonged to the Orthodox *millet* whose leader was the Greek Orthodox Patriarch in Istanbul. After the establishment of the Greek Kingdom Greek schools, funded by Athens, spread in the Balkans, especially in Macedonia, where Bulgarian nationalism was a threat for the Greek aspirations to annex these provinces and incorporate them into Greece. Using the clergy and education Greek nationalism tried to win over Bulgarian speaking populations. In order to face this danger the Ottoman government permitted the creation of the Bulgarian Exarchate Church and the Romanian Orthodox Church despite the protests of the Patriarchate. For the *Millet* system see: Benjamin Braude & Bernard Lewis, *Christian and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society Vol. 1* (London and New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982).

<sup>100</sup>Hough Pulton, *Top Hat, Grey Wolf and Crescent: Turkish Nationalism and the Turkish Republic* (London: Hurst and Company, 1997), p. 56.

<sup>101</sup>Lewis, *The Emergence*, p. 342.

When, in 1897, a young poet called Mehmed Emin published a volume called *Türkçe Şiirler* (Poems in Turkish) the Ottoman elite considered the term “Turk” to pertain to the rural, uneducated masses of Anatolia. In the poem, Emin said the following: “I am a Turk, my faith and my race are mighty”.<sup>102</sup> Even if Kushner is right in that the Turkishness of the writers of the Hamidian period is cultural,<sup>103</sup> it is in that period that the ideal of Turkism appears for the first time. This idea evolved significantly with the emergence of the Young Turks and their associations within the boundaries of the Empire as well as abroad.<sup>104</sup> Russian-born intellectual Yusuf Akçura put forward the idea of Pan-Turkism, the union of all Turkish populations in one state, which gained popularity in the 1910s but faded away with the October revolution in 1918 and Ziya Gökalp’s assertion of the need to join European civilization but hold on to Turkish culture.<sup>105</sup>

According to Fatma Müge Göçek, Turkish nationalism was based on the following factors: the wars fought by the Ottoman army in the period from 1878 to 1913 that resulted in the loss of the Balkan territories, Crete and Cyprus, loss of life and the influx of refugees from the lost provinces; the impact of the capitulations and the control of trade by foreigners and Christian minorities, especially at a time when the compatriots of the Christian merchants were seen as being aggressive against Ottoman Muslims in the Balkans; the bureaucratic reforms that intensified social tensions and alienated Ottoman Muslims and Christians due to the privileges granted to the latter; the educational reforms and emergence of the printed press that disseminated the new ideas; and, finally, the interaction of the secret associations,

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 343.

<sup>103</sup>David Kushner, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Doğuşu 1876-1908* (Istanbul: Fener Yayınları, 1998), p. 131.

<sup>104</sup>For the Young Turks see: Masami Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

<sup>105</sup>Zürcher, *Turkey*, p. 136. For Ziya Gökalp see Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp* (London: Luzac & Company and The Harvill Press, 1950).



especially the ones founded by members of the Committee of Union and Progress and the political parties.<sup>106</sup>

The outcome of the First World War precipitated not only the fall of the Ottoman Empire but also the consolidation of Turkish nationalism. The Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 provided for the occupation of Istanbul and parts of Anatolia by Britain, France and Italy, but most importantly allowed the creation of an Armenian state in northeastern Anatolia and the administration of the area of Izmir by Greece, which would leave only a small area in central and eastern Anatolia for a Turkish homeland. Led by Mustafa Kemal, the nationalist intellectuals first prepared the ideological basis of their struggle for national independence and then, from 1920 to 1922, fought the war against the invading forces. The victorious outcome of the *İstiklâl Savaşı*, the War of Independence, secured most of the territories that the nationalists had sworn to defend in the *Misak-ı Millî*, the National Pact that was approved by the last Ottoman Parliament in 1920.<sup>107</sup>

According to Taner Akçam, the reasons for the late emergence of Turkish nationalism are Islam, the imperial and multinational character of the Ottoman state and the attempt to save the Empire by using Islam and Ottomanism as tools.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, Akçam argues that what led to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, namely foreign intervention and occupation, the hostile policies of European powers and the role of the Christian populations, accordingly shaped Turkish nationalism. For example, Akçam refers to the fear of national extinction, animosity towards Christian minorities and suspicion towards human rights and democracy.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>Fatma Müge Göçek, “Osmanlı Devleti’nde Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Oluşumu: Sosyolojik bir Yaklaşım” in Tanıl Bora (ed.) *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasî Düşünce: Milliyetçilik* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002) pp. 63-76.

<sup>107</sup>The *Misak-ı Millî* was a text that consisted of six articles. They determined that the areas that were to remain under the sovereignty of a Muslim Ottoman State. They excluded the Arab provinces but included some Balkan provinces and Mosul. At the end of the War of Independence the new Turkish state included the whole of Anatolia and Eastern Thrace. It considered a milestone for Turkish nationalism because it defined the limits of the homeland for Ottoman Muslims, namely for Turks and Kurds.

<sup>108</sup>Taner Akçam, “Türk Ulusal Kimliği Üzerine Bazı Tezler”, in Tanıl Bora (ed.) *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasî Düşünce: Milliyetçilik* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002) p. 54.

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 53-62.

The victorious outcome of the Turkish War of Independence shaped the fate of Modern Turkey and Turkish nationalism alike. The exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey created a homogeneous Turkish Republic. With the abolition of the Caliphate and the Sultanate and the implementation of the secularist reforms, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk tried to move Turkey away from its Islamic past and integrate its people into Western civilization. According to Smith's analysis, Atatürk's nationalism was a mixture of territorial and ethnic nationalisms: Kemalist nationalism considered Anatolia to be the homeland of the Turkish nation, which included the Kurds but excluded the Christians.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, since the establishment of the Republic in 1923, the presence of the few Greek and Armenians who remained in Turkey, primarily in Istanbul, was tolerated by the Kemalist bureaucracy.

Kemalist nationalism was born, like Kemalist Turkey, from a victorious war against foreign powers that threatened the existence of a Turkish homeland in Anatolia. The Turkish Cypriots, like other Turkish populations in the Balkans, were not included in the Turkish state, but they formed part of the Turkish nation. Since Kemalist ideology defined the characteristics of the Turkish nation, these had to be accepted by Turkish communities in order for them to reaffirm their place within the Turkish nation. Like the new Turkish identity, the new Turkish Cypriot identity was shaped throughout the 1920s.

### **Turkish Nationalism in Cyprus – From an Ottoman-Muslim Community to an Ethnic Turkish Minority**

From when Cyprus was conquered by the Ottomans in 1571 until the start of British rule in 1878, the Turkish Cypriots constituted the ruling element. The privileges granted to the Orthodox Church secured a relatively long period of peace with occasional disturbances that were caused by social or financial issues. As we have seen, the revolt of 1821 was quickly

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<sup>110</sup>Poulton, *Top hat*, p. 97.

suppressed and, despite the rise of nationalism in Greece, there was no major unrest until the end of Ottoman rule. The distance from the capital and the absence of urban Christian populations meant that the Tanzimat reforms brought little change to the lives of both Greeks and Turkish Cypriots. The end of Ottoman rule was a great shock to the Turkish Cypriots. Not only did they have to come under the administration of a Christian power, they also had to share power with a Christian community that expressed – from the first day of the new administration – their wish to unite the island with Greece. Unlike the Greek Cypriots, who had the ideological tools of Greek nationalism, the Turkish Cypriots could not resort to Turkish nationalism, since Ottoman currents of thought had not yet produced a well-defined idea of Ottoman-Turkish nationalism.

The main concern of the Turkish Cypriot elite was to secure the community's position on the island and to make sure that the British would not give in to the Greek Cypriot demand for *Enosis*. Effective cooperation with the colonial government made the Turkish Cypriots the faithful and trustworthy element, in contrast to the Greek Cypriots. Given that the British kept intact the state apparatus they had inherited from the Ottomans, the Turkish Cypriots were interested in keeping their positions in the state sector. By demonstrating their loyalty to the colonial government, they could secure their status in the administration. Hence, in contrast to Greek nationalism, Turkish nationalism was not reactionary, since it did not advocate the end of colonial rule. On the contrary, until the end of the 1920s, the Turkish Cypriot elite insisted on the continuation of colonial rule as a counterweight to Greek irredentism.

The ideas of the Young Turks reached Cyprus through the arrival on Cyprus of members of the Young Turk movement. They contributed to the Turkish Cypriot press and, to a certain extent, created a wave of sympathy for the Young Turk cause, although the majority of the Turkish Cypriots supported the Sultan.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, the Young Turk intellectuals contributed to the spread of Turkish nationalism through the 1909 opening of the Association

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<sup>111</sup>Niyazi Kızılyürek, *Milliyetçilik Kıskaçında Kıbrıs* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), 216.

of Freedom and Progress, *Hürriyet ve Terakki*, which was later renamed “Brethen Hearth”, *Kardeş Ocağı*.<sup>112</sup> This is the oldest Turkish Cypriot association that survives to this day. According to the memoirs of Turkish Cypriot lawyer Fadıl Niyazi Korkut, it was founded through the merger of two clubs, the “Turkish Mutual Help Association”, *Türk Taaviün Derneği*, and the “Progress Association”, *Terakki Kulübü*.<sup>113</sup> We do not have much information on the Association, but the Young Turk ideas gained popularity in the years following the revolution of 1909.<sup>114</sup> We can say that, during this period, the division in the Turkish Cypriot elite was consolidated. On the one hand, there were “Ottoman Cypriots” who emphasized the Islamic-Ottoman identity of the community and pledged allegiance to the Sultan and, on the other hand, there were supporters of the Young Turks who put emphasis on the Turkish identity of the community. Although Turkish was gradually replacing Ottoman identity, it was not until the start of the Turkish War of Independence in 1919, and the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, that Turkish identity was consolidated among the Turks in Anatolia and elsewhere. Despite the fact that Cyprus remained outside of the National Pact, the *Misak-ı Millî*, which set the limits of the Turkish state that was going to succeed the Ottoman Empire, Turkish nationalism in Cyprus did not adopt an irredentist nature. With the help of intellectuals, the press and education, the Turkish Cypriots adopted the ideals of Turkish-Kemalist nationalism. The urge to adopt the Kemalist reforms can be explained by concern for the survival of the community. Administered by a colonial-Christian power and sharing the island with a radicalized Greek Cypriot community that ignored their presence, Turkish Cypriot identity had to be reformed along the lines of the Kemalist ideology: the new Turkey would be secular, Westernized and independent. By conforming to these principles, the Turkish Cypriots placed themselves in the Turkish nation, as this had been defined by Kemalist ideology. The anti-British, anti-colonialist comments of the

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>113</sup>Harid Fedai & Mustafa H. Altan (eds.), *Hatıralar: Fadıl Niyazi Korkut* (Gazimağusa: Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi, 2000), p.61.

<sup>114</sup>Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation* (London: Hurst and Company, 1995), p. 49.

Kemalist press in the late 1920s can thus be attributed to the influence of Kemalist principles.<sup>115</sup> According to Ahmet Kuyaş, anti-imperialist thought in Kemalist Turkey was limited to what was described as leftist Kemalism (*Sol Kemalizm*).<sup>116</sup> However, since the Young Ottomans, anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism had become popular. Hence, Turkish Cypriot nationalists could draw on the anti-imperialist components of Kemalism in order to build their anti-colonial rhetoric.

On the other hand, the colonial framework within which Turkish nationalism evolved in Cyprus permitted certain controversies, such as the opposition of the Nationalists to the abolition of the Muftiship or the concern for the fate of the Nicosia Medrese.<sup>117</sup> For the nationalists, such deviations from Kemalist secular ideology were necessary, since the Muslim institutions were considered part of the community's identity and it was thought that they would safeguard this identity in a Christian environment.

The status of the island and the British presence in Cyprus can explain the resiliency of the *Evkâfçılar*, the supporters of the colonial government among the Turkish Cypriots. It should be noted that, like the Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots too were unaware of the debate between Turkists and Ottomanists and Turkish nationalism started spreading among the Turkish Cypriot masses after the 1920s. The debate about the leadership of the community intensified in the 1920s and the *Evkâfçılar* gradually lost ground due to the blatant intervention of the colonial government in the Turkish Cypriot religious institutions and the further curtailing of the community's autonomy. These interventions shook the community's loyalty to the colonial government and led to the gradual radicalization of the Turkish Cypriots. Due to the *Enosis* threat, however, good relations with the British were maintained throughout the inter-war period.

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<sup>115</sup>Ibid., p. 176-77.

<sup>116</sup>Ahmet Kuyaş, "Yeni Osmanlılar'dan 1930'lara Anti-emperyalist Düşünce" in Ahmet İnsel, *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasî Düşünce: Kemalizm*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), pp. 247-252.

<sup>117</sup>See Chapter 6.

To conclude, in the period under investigation, Turkish nationalism was conveyed in Cyprus through education and the press. The quest for survival in what was conceived as a hostile environment, the impact of British colonial policies and the Greek Cypriot pro-*Enosis* activity contributed to the consolidation of Turkish nationalism in Cyprus.

### **The Turkish Cypriot elite from the early years of British Rule until 1918**

On the eve of British rule in Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriot society could be described as predominantly rural, although the proportion of Turkish Cypriots living in urban centers was higher than that of Greek Cypriots.<sup>118</sup> The Cypriot economy was still mainly agricultural in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the Turkish Cypriot masses, quite like the Greek Cypriots, were farmers. The main issues facing the lower classes at the time were excessive taxation and their dependency on the large land-owners. The Church of Cyprus controlled a lot of land, which added to its political and social influence.<sup>119</sup> The *Evkâf*, the Muslim endowments that could be considered the equivalent to the Orthodox Church, also possessed considerable property.

While the lower classes suffered under heavy taxation, the local elites took a rather separate path. Due to its limited access to state jobs, the Greek Cypriot elite dominated trade, and thus managed to accumulate wealth and power. Contrastingly, the Turkish Cypriot elite dominated bureaucracy and the police force.<sup>120</sup> This privilege was lost soon after the advent of the British. Although Cyprus was still under the suzerainty of the Sultan, the imposition of

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<sup>118</sup>Niyazi Kızılyürek, *Kıbrıs Sorununda İç ve Dış Etkinlikler*, Lefkoşa: Işık Kitabevi Yayınları, 1983, p. 34.

<sup>119</sup>Marios Hadjianastasis, "Cyprus in the Ottoman Period: Consolidation of the Cypro-Ottoman Elite, 1650-1750", Michalis N. Michael, Mattias Kappler and Eftihios Gavriel (eds.), *Ottoman Cyprus: A Collection of Studies on History and Culture*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009, p. 65.

<sup>120</sup>Georghallides, *A political*, p. 414.

British rule caused the loss of the Turkish Cypriots' dominant position. The Turkish Cypriot population was a minority throughout Ottoman rule, but the status of the island as an Ottoman dominion was undisputed. Once the administration of the island was transferred to the British, the Turkish Cypriots were deprived of a protecting power, a government that guaranteed their rights but also regulated their everyday life through the appointment of religious, judicial and educational officials. Although, in the early stages of British rule, the Colonial government respected the existing bureaucratic structures that the Turkish Cypriot elite had to share power with a much more numerous Christian elite that was not only politically more dynamic, but also wealthier and readier to exploit the new opportunities that the British administration provided for the realization of their national goal, *Enosis* with Greece.

Within a quarter of a century after the advent of the British, the numbers of Turkish Cypriot schools rose from 71 to 144, while the number of pupils in said schools rose at an impressive rate of 177%.<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, while the Greek Cypriot schools had introduced a relatively modern curriculum, the Turkish Cypriot schools still gave greater emphasis to religious classes.<sup>122</sup> Education thrived under British administration, but the Turkish Cypriot elite lacked the funds and the structures to help boost Turkish Cypriot education. With the financial support of the elite, Greek Cypriot education was oriented towards the diffusion of the Greek ideal, thus preparing Greek Cypriot youth for the realization of *Enosis*. The Turkish Cypriot elite, on the contrary, could not support Turkish Cypriot education due to the lack of funds. Furthermore, Turkish Cypriots had to face new realities. Facing a rising Greek Cypriot nationalism, they decided to align themselves with the colonial administration, believing that in this way they could eliminate the threat of *Enosis*. In a petition to the Colonial Office in 1882, the Turkish Cypriots showed their discontent for the representation of the Greek Cypriots in the Legislative Council, which outnumbered the Turkish Cypriot members, and pointed out that "the Moslems had loyally accepted the change in the government of the

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<sup>121</sup>Rolandos Katsiaounis, *Labour, Society and Politics in Cyprus during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 1996), p. 92.

<sup>122</sup>Nesim Ali, *Batmayan Eğitim Güneşlerimiz* (Lefkoşa, 1987), p. 12.

island, not listening to the anti-English party, whereas the Greeks were agitating for the ruin and the oppression of the Moslems”.<sup>123</sup> Loyalty to the Colonial government was perceived by the Turkish Cypriot elite as a necessary condition for the survival of the community. With the Cretan revolt of 1895, the Turkish Cypriot elite realized that Greek Cypriot claims could have serious repercussions for the fate of the community. An alignment with the colonial government was seen as the only chance to protect Turkish Cypriot rights. According to Kızılyürek, the Turkish Cypriot elite aligned with the Colonial power not only in order to safeguard the rights of the community, but also in order to safeguard its own position.<sup>124</sup> This alignment was not only responsible for the late emergence of Turkish Cypriot nationalism, which was also delayed by external factors, mainly the late emergence of Turkish nationalism. It was also responsible for the internal divisions of the Turkish Cypriot elite that were resolved, as we shall see, only in the late 1930s.

The Turkish Cypriot elite were left unprotected after the withdrawal of the Ottoman administration. In the same way that the Orthodox Church assumed the leading position among the Greek Cypriots, it was the Turkish Cypriot religious institutions that attempted to play this role for the Turkish Cypriot community. The absence of a wealthy elite of merchants or lawyers and the later emergence of secularizing forces among the Turkish Cypriots increased the importance of the religious institutions. Hence, until 1918, the Delegate of the Evkâf, the Mufti and the Baş Kadı (Chief Judge) claimed a leading role in the Turkish Cypriot community, drawing their legitimacy from their religious duties, their role in the management of the community's wealth or their appointment by the Ottoman government.

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<sup>123</sup>Sir George Hill, *A History of Cyprus Vol. IV* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p.419.

<sup>124</sup>Niyazi Kızılyürek, *The Turkish Cypriot Upper Class and the Question of Identity, Turkish Cypriot Identity in Literature*, (London: Fatal Publications), 1990, p. 23.



## The *Evkâf*

Towards the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Turkish Cypriot community was still defined in religious rather than national terms. Their alignment with the colonial government and the disintegration of the Ottoman framework throughout the 1910s delayed the consolidation of a secular, nationalist elite. The Muslim institutions that were inherited by the Ottoman administration played an important role under the British, too. The *evkâf*, the department that administered religious properties and lands, played a crucial role in the financial, educational and spiritual affairs of the community, and thus the individuals who were appointed as its administrators enjoyed a leading position among the Turkish Cypriots. Together with the *Evkâf*, the spiritual leadership of the Turkish Cypriots was concentrated in the offices of the Mufti, the supervisor of religious life on the island, and that of the Baş Kadı, the Chief Judge of religious tribunals.

The term *evkâf* (plural of the Arabic word wakf, Ottoman Turkish vakıf) is used to describe a pious foundation, the responsibilities of which included the administration of religious properties and lands for philanthropic and religious purposes.<sup>125</sup> The income produced by these properties was used to support the poor and subsidize educational and other communal institutions. The local *Evkâf* department coordinated the administration of the properties and supervised the proper distribution of the income generated, but overall supervision was performed by the *Evkâf* department in Istanbul. There were many different kinds of *Evkâf* properties, but we shall refer to the two most common ones: The Mazbuta (*Evkâf-ı Mazbuta*) and the Mülhak Vakf.<sup>126</sup> The Mazbuta vakf were administered by the *evkâf* department. They were religious or philanthropic buildings, such as mosques or tekkes, and public buildings or infrastructure, such as custom houses, bridges or aqueducts.<sup>127</sup> Mülhak

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<sup>125</sup>Netice Yıldız, "The Vakf Institution in Ottoman Cyprus", in Michalis N. Michael, Mattias Kappler and Eftihios Gavriel (eds.), *Ottoman Cyprus: A Collection of Studies on History and Culture*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), p. 117

<sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid.*, p.118.

vakfs were administered by trustees (mütevelli) who were appointed by the founders. These properties were often shops, houses or fields.

Given the *evkâf*'s importance for almost all aspects of Muslim community life, the colonial government sought to get control soon after the transfer of power to the British. The first measure the colonial government took was to appoint a British delegate of the *evkâf*. The Ottoman government had the right to appoint the Muslim delegate, but did not practice this right.<sup>128</sup> The British delegate identified various irregularities in the practices of the administrator and the trustees.<sup>129</sup> This provided the pretext for the government to take control of the *evkâf*. Almost all reforms of Turkish Cypriot religious institutions were conducted with the pretense of protecting the interests of the community through the elimination of misrule. Hence, the *Evkâf* gradually became a governmental department. In 1882, the government appointed Ahmet Hulusi Efendi as the Muslim delegate of the *Evkâf* and his appointment was ratified by both the Mufti and the Chief Kadi of Cyprus.<sup>130</sup> For the next fifty years, the Turkish Cypriot Delegate of the *Evkâf* would be the unofficial leader of the Turkish Cypriots. Despite the fact that he was in essence an official of the Colonial government, the administration of such a crucial institution for the Turkish Cypriot community gave the Delegate of the *Evkâf* powers and influence that resembled those of the Archbishop for the Greek Cypriots.

After Ahmet Hulusi's death in 1899, Ahmet Sadık Efendi was appointed delegate of the *Evkâf*. After the latter's death in 1903, Musa İrfan Bey was appointed delegate of the *Evkâf*. He remained in this position until his death in 1925. He was elected member of the Legislative Council for three consecutive terms (1913, 1915 and 1921) and also served as a member of the Executive Council. In addition, he was the chairman of the Turkish Middle

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<sup>128</sup>Eleni Bouleti, "The Muslim Community on Cyprus and British Colonial Policy, 1878-1915: The Significance of the Cyprus Evkaf in the Colonisation Process", *The Cyprus Review*, Fall 2011, Vol. 23, No.2, p. 49.

<sup>129</sup>*Ibid.*, p.47.

<sup>130</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 49.

School Commission.<sup>131</sup> Musa İrfan worked as a teacher before he was appointed to the *Evkâf* in 1899. He was considered a decent administrator of the finances of the institution, while he also contributed in the building of the Haydarpaşa School in Nicosia.<sup>132</sup> Nevertheless, the over-concentration of power in the hands of the Delegate of the *Evkâf* and the institutionalization of the position caused the Mufti and the *Baş Kadi*, the main representatives of the old Ottoman elite, to react. In 1907, they accused him of not running the *Evkâf* according to Islamic principles and of not being suitable for the post.<sup>133</sup> The accusations were not addressed directly to Musa İrfan; they were rather an expression of grievance with the new status quo, which the old elite could not attack directly, since it was tolerated by the Ottoman government. This debate between the supporters and opponents of government policy was reflected in the press of the time. *Mirat-ı Zaman* supported Musa İrfan, while *Sünuhat* expressed opposition to the government's *Evkâf* policy. *Sünuhat*'s publisher's son, history professor Ahmet Şükrü Esmer, explained the newspaper's anti-government stance as a reaction to the colonization of the Turkish Cypriot institutions, the appointment of pro-British teachers in the Turkish Cypriot schools and the partiality of British policy, given the fact that the Greek Cypriots were allowed considerable independence in their religious and educational affairs.<sup>134</sup> This debate continued until the death of Musa İrfan and was intensified by the appointment of Mehmet Münir Bey in 1925.

The debate was eloquently described in an article by Dr Hafız Cemal which was published in the weekly *İslam* on April 6, 1908:

I studied the Ottoman newspapers that have been published on the island until now and I have made an analysis of why [they] do not influence the nation, the Muslims of the island, as much as the Greek Cypriot press. I finally found out. It is well understood that every newspaper necessarily takes sides. There are publications that always exaggerate in favour of the side they support. Their columns are filled with hundreds of lies. Briefly following the usual prejudice, opposition, envy, personal self-interest of

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<sup>131</sup>James McHenry, *The Uneasy Partnership on Cyprus, 1919-1939* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), p.124.

<sup>132</sup>Aristeidis Koudounaris, *Viografikon Lexikon Kiprion 1800-1920*, (Nicosia, 2005), p. 287.

<sup>133</sup>Bouleti, "The Muslim", p. 51.

<sup>134</sup>Cemaletin Ünlü, *Kıbrıs'ta Basın Olayı* (Ankara: Basın Genel Müdürlüğü, 1981), p. 39.

some of our newspapers, [reading] references of the virtue, maturity, success and good deeds of the person they support, resorting to sad cases [of people] who behave like mad dogs that go around attacking, makes someone agree. Nevertheless, even cold-blooded ones are not serious at all. At least ninety percent of our people read the newspaper of the side they support most of the time free of charge, read the frivolous, unrealistic partisan statements and say “look how our has newspaper put down and silenced the other side, what a nice answer they gave, how strange that is all that is written”. The newspapers’ words come to the mouths of the people and for a week at home, in coffee houses or even in some of our women’s associations, the people utter these words to each other and they have fun and laugh.<sup>135</sup>

The reactions caused by the institutionalization of the *Evkâf* can be attributed to the overthrow of the old political elite, whose role and access to the lucrative religious endowments were gradually limited. Government control over the *Evkâf* was certainly a source of discontent – and the argument that the British were the only force that could protect the community and curtail Greek Cypriot claims for *Enosis* was not enough to limit the anti-government complaints. Furthermore, the attempt to rationalize the *Evkâf* administration in order to improve its financial condition led to the incorporation of various smaller properties to the central administration, which caused the dismissal of their trustees and a subsequent loss of income.<sup>136</sup> Apart from the fact that the new conditions caused discomfort among many Turkish Cypriots – members of the elite and the lower and middle classes – the attacks against Musa İrfan can also be attributed to petty politics. For example, *Sünuhat*’s opposition to Musa İrfan was allegedly orchestrated by its financier Podamyalızade Mehmet Münir Bey in an attempt to oppose the Delegate of the *Evkâf*.<sup>137</sup> The latter’s brother-in-law, Podamyalızade Şevket Mehmet Bey, was a prominent Turkish Cypriot teacher, journalist at *Yeni Zaman*, member of the Legislative Council from 1906 to 1913 and mayor of Nicosia from 1908 to 1911. He was also member of a Turkish Cypriot mission to Istanbul in 1907 that was dispatched in order to discuss educational issues with the community. He was accompanied by Ziyai Hacı Hafız Efendi, teacher, member of the Legislative Council (1896-1904) and

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<sup>135</sup> Ahmet An, *Kıbrıs Türk Liderliğinin Oluşması* (Lefkoşa: Galeri Kültür Yayınları, 1997),

<sup>136</sup> Bouleti, *The Muslim*, p. 51.

<sup>137</sup> An, *Kıbrıs*, p.20.

Mufti of Cyprus from 1910-1927, and Osman Cemal Efendi, prominent lawyer, columnist at *Mirat-ı Zaman* and deputy mayor to Podamyalızade Şevket Bey.

The close association of the Delegate of the *Evkâf* with the British intensified the reaction of the nationalist Turkish Cypriots who, strengthened by the victorious outcome of the Turkish War of Independence, expressed their doubts regarding the ability of Musa İrfan Bey to advance Turkish Cypriot interests. Two petitions, one in 1922 and another in 1924, suggested an alteration to the British policy, asking that a committee elected by Turkish Cypriots administer the *Evkâf*.<sup>138</sup>

The opposition to Musa İrfan did not manage to remove him from his post or change the British *Evkâf* policy. The *Evkâf* delegate died penniless in 1925, which proves his integrity. The debate between the supporters and the adversaries of British policy intensified towards the end of the 1920s, as we shall see in the following chapter.

### **The office of the Mufti**

The Mufti is considered the spiritual leader of an Islamic community. He is the interpreter of Islamic law and, until the advent of the British, he was appointed by Istanbul. The British did not interfere with the office of the Mufti and accepted the Ottoman government's appointment of Muftis in 1896 and 1912. Nevertheless, the office of the Mufti, like that of the Baş Kadi, lost a lot of its importance and independence under the British. They were paid by the Colonial government and in this way they were considered government officials.<sup>139</sup>

The Mufti was by no means a political figure. The advent of the British created new conditions and uncertainties regarding the fate of the community. The centralization of the Islamic institutions, namely the offices of the Mufti, the Chief Judge and the *Evkâf*, as we

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<sup>138</sup>McHenry, *The Uneasy*, p. 125.

<sup>139</sup>G.S. Georghallides, *A political and Administrative History of Cyprus 1818-1926* (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 1979), p. 408.

have seen, eliminated the autonomy of the community.<sup>140</sup> Under such circumstances, it was possible for the office of the Mufti, the spiritual leader of Islamic communities, to evolve into the status of a political leader too, given the lack of political leadership in the Turkish Cypriot community. The gap created by the evacuation of the Ottoman Empire from Cyprus gave the Muslim clergy an opportunity to undertake a more active role as representatives of the community.<sup>141</sup> For example, in 1882, the Mufti Ahmed Asim expressed the community's discontent towards the decisions of the British Government to give equal rights to the Greek Cypriots, thus eliminating the Turkish Cypriots' leading position.<sup>142</sup> It was again the Mufti who, in 1895, asked of the government that measures be taken to prevent Greek Cypriot pro-*Enosis* rallies.<sup>143</sup>

The appointment of Hacı Hafız Ziyai Efendi in 1912 saw the arrival in the post of a well-known teacher who held a prominent position among the Turkish Cypriots. Hacı Hafız Ziyai Efendi was born in 1850 in Nicosia and was educated in Istanbul as well as at the Al Azhar mosque in Cairo. He served as head teacher of the Rüstiye School (Junior High School) for sixteen years. After the school was reformed according to the Ottoman Educational Reforms and changed its name into İdadi (High School), Hacı Hafız Ziyai Efendi taught religious classes for four years.<sup>144</sup> In 1894, he was elected member of the Turkish Educational Board. He was elected president of the Board in 1910, a position that he kept until his death in 1936. He also served for two terms in the Legislative Council and, before being appointed to the office of the Mufti, he served as a Chief Judge from 1906 until 1912. In 1912, he was appointed Mufti of Cyprus. He served for 15 years until 1927, when he resigned. Hacı Hafız Ziyai Efendi served at a sensitive period for the Turkish Cypriot community, which anxiously

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<sup>140</sup>Altay Nevzat, "Securing the Office of the Müftü: Nationalism, Religion and the Turks of Cyprus," in Ayhan Aktar, Niyazi Kızılyürek, Umut Özkırmı (eds.), *Nationalism in the Troubled Triangle: Cyprus, Greece and Turkey* (London: Palgrave, 2010), p.162

<sup>141</sup>Bryant, *Imagining*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>142</sup>Nevzat, "Securing", p.162.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., p.162

<sup>144</sup>Ali Nesim, *Batmayan Eğitim Güneşlerimiz: Kıbrıs Türk Eğitimi Hakkında bir Araştırma* (Lefkoşa: Milli Eğitim ve Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1987), p. 61.

watched the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the Greek Cypriots' pro-Enosis activities. The association of the Delegate of the *Evkâf* with the colonial administration, and the reluctance of the traditional leadership to question the allegiance to the Colonial Government, pushed the Mufti to undertake political initiatives. For example, together with other prominent Turkish Cypriots, the Mufti signed a petition that expressed the community's worries about Greek Cypriot *Enosis* claims. The most important of these initiatives was the convocation of a Turkish Cypriot national assembly (Meclis-i Millet) in 1918. The assembly took place under the presidency of the Mufti in his residence in Nicosia. The assembly voiced once again Turkish Cypriot fears of Greek Cypriot irredentism and expressed the wish of the community for the return of the island to the Ottoman Empire. The following year, the Mufti attempted to visit Paris as the leader of a Turkish Cypriot delegation in order to promote the Turkish Cypriots' position. The colonial government, however, did not allow the delegation to leave Cyprus.<sup>145</sup>

The retirement of Hacı Hafız Ziyai Efendi in 1927 offered the Colonial government the opportunity to dissolve the office of the Mufti and to institutionalize it by attaching it to the Department of *Evkâf*, which the government had controlled since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. As we shall see in the following chapter, this decision increased anti-government sentiment among the Turkish Cypriots and strengthened further the nationalist party. As for the Mufti himself, he died in 1936 but, unlike Musa İrfan, there were allegations that he had used his position in order to acquire more property.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup>Ibid, p.63.

<sup>146</sup>Ali Nesim, *Kıbrıslı Türklerin Kimliği*, (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim ve Kültür Bakanlığı Yayını, 1990), p16.

## The Sheri courts

The third institution, which completes the Turkish Cypriot communal network of power, was the Religious or Sheri court system (Mahkeme Sher'î). According to the Cyprus Convention, the Sheri Courts would coexist with the civil courts. The main judge, the *Baş Kadı*, centered in Nicosia, was nominated by the Ottoman government and appointed by the High Commissioner. Three other judges who were under the authority of the *Baş Kadı* were appointed for local tribunals.<sup>147</sup> The British considered this system quite costly and a luxury for a relatively small population.<sup>148</sup> During the First World War, Britain used the Ottoman government's decision to enter the war with the Central Powers as a pretext to intervene in affairs that fell within the jurisdiction of the Kadı, namely the administration of property belonging to Ottoman subjects.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, as we shall see in the next chapter, the Colonial Government was worried by the inefficiency of the Courts. The colonial government would use the financial affairs of the Turkish Cypriot institutions as a pretext in order to tighten its control over the community.

The Baş Kadı, Numan Efendi, used his office in order to attack the Delegate of the *Evkâf* on various occasions. In 1906, he accused Musa İrfan of being unsuitable for the post and argued that his appointment was not canonical and that he had intervened in the Legislative Council elections.<sup>150</sup> In 1909, the Baş Kadı requested the removal of Musa İrfan from his office. In his petition he said the following:

Musa İrfan Efendi performs the duties he has been assigned without neutrality and cannot gain [our] confidence. He always succumbs to selfish goals. There are a lot of grievances regarding the sacred Köprülüzade Mosque in Limassol that has suffered damage from the flood but no maintenance has been done [...] In one word many village mosques are in ruins. They have their own endowment but this money is not spent.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup>McHenry, *The Uneasy*, p. 119.

<sup>148</sup>C.J.Orr, *Cyprus under British Rule*, (London: Zeno Publishers, 1972), p. 117.

<sup>149</sup>McHenry, p. 121.

<sup>150</sup>An, *Kıbrıs*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>151</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 22.



These attacks against the *Evkâf* and the Delegate of the *Evkâf* were frequently not only because of governmental policies. By attacking Musa İrfan for being unsuitable, the *Baş Kadı* actually voiced concern for his increasing power. Long before Musa İrfan's appointment to the office of the Delegate of the *Evkâf*, prominent Turkish Cypriots had attempted unsuccessfully to abolish that office and attach it to the office of the *Baş Kadı*. The complaints can also be attributed to the limited powers that the *Baş Kadı* enjoyed under the British. In the interim report of 1949, we read that the religious judges had lost their religious functions, confining their work to litigation on matters of judicial character.

### **The establishment and role of the Legislative Council in local politics**

Soon after the advent of British rule, on 14 September 1878, the colonial government introduced a Legislative Council that consisted of the High Commissioner and up to eight official and unofficial members. This was by no means an innovation in Cypriot politics, since the new body was based on the *Meclis-i İdare* system (Administrative Council) that was in effect until 1878. While the Assistant Governor and the Chief of Justice were appointed by virtue of their office, the remaining members were elected by the local population.<sup>152</sup> In the Legislative Council, the members would be appointed by the King or Queen, or provisionally by the presiding High Commissioner. With the 1882 constitutional reform, the following changes were made: The council consisted of twelve elected and six official members. It was presided over by the High Commissioner who had the casting vote. The twelve members were elected by the two communities in accordance with their numbers. That provided for nine Christian and three Muslim members. The council met at least once a year and elections were held every five years. The electorate consisted of all males over the age of twenty one who paid the property tax. Issues such as the salaries of state officials or taxation would be

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<sup>152</sup> Ahmet Gazioğlu, *The Turks in Cyprus: The Province of the Ottoman Empire (1571-1878)* (London: Rustem&Brother, 1990), p. 101.

discussed in the Council but in the case of a disagreement the decision depended on the vote of the High Commissioner. The latter was given the right to approve laws by Order in Council.

As a result, the Legislative Council managed to cause discontent not only among both communities, but also in Britain, where some voices characterized the Council as a “toy parliament” or a “sham gift”.<sup>153</sup> The Greek Cypriots were discontented because their majority in the council was counterbalanced by the vote of the six official members and that of the High Commissioner. Even the terms “Muslim” and “Christian” were used as an attempt to avoid any identification of the “Greek Cypriot” members with Greece, thereby to undermine the goal of Enosis. The Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, saw the Legislative Council as a direct threat to their rights since, as they argued, “[the government] was giving the Greeks the greatest of all privileges by allotting them nine Christian members to three Muslims, whereas in Asia Minor, where the Muslims were in the great majority, the Christians had equal numbers and votes on Administrative Councils”.<sup>154</sup> In terms of functionality, the council did not have any real powers, since it could not take any decisions on financial issues, for example.

After the initial euphoria, the Greek Cypriot members attempted to pass reforms that would make them the absolute majority in the council. These proposals were turned down in 1889, 1907 and 1911. The Greek Cypriot members resigned en masse in 1911 and in 1920, after their proposals were rejected by the Council, but that measure too proved futile. When Cyprus became a crown colony in 1925, a constitutional reform increased the number of Greek Cypriot members to twelve while the number of Turkish Cypriot members remained three. The increase in the number of the elected members did not alter the balance of power and the Greek Cypriot majority was annulled through the alliance of the Turkish Cypriot members with the appointed members, while the High Commissioner – who was now called

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<sup>153</sup>Hill, *A History*, p. 419

<sup>154</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 420.

Governor – retained the right of veto. The reformed council was not endowed with new powers and in various instances bills were passed through an Order-in-Council.<sup>155</sup>

Despite its shortcomings, the Legislative Council soon became a point of reference for political life. Though it was not qualified to make or approve laws, the local elites, both Greek and Turkish Cypriots, gained influence and power through their election. The spiritual, political and intellectual leaders of the two communities were represented in the council.<sup>156</sup> The Archbishop of Cyprus and local bishops served in most of the eleven terms and the *Evkâf Murahhası*, the Delegate of the *Evkâf*, Musa İrfan, served consecutive terms from 1913 until 1925. His successor, Mehmet Münir Bey, served from 1925 until 1931. While a degree in law was a passport to office for Greek Cypriot members, the smaller number of Turkish Cypriot members meant that, after the *Evkâf* delegate and occasionally the Kadi and the Mufti, the remaining seats would be distributed among the remaining members of the elite. The average Turkish member had some sort of relation with the *Evkâf*, in the Young Turk era journalistic activity and quite often some teaching experience. Occasionally, doctors and lawyers were elected too. The limited commercial activity of the Turkish Cypriots explains the absence of merchants in the Legislative Council. The triumph of Mısırlızade Necati Özkan, a Turkish Cypriot merchant, in the 1930 elections is thus significant.<sup>157</sup>

## Conclusions

The Turkish Cypriot elite found itself at a crossroads after the end of the Ottoman administration. The Turkish Cypriots had lost their leading position and were now obliged to share power with a Christian community that was more numerous and politically more active. Most importantly, the Greek Cypriot struggle for Enosis was a constant source of worry for

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<sup>155</sup>Ibid., pp. 428-29.

<sup>156</sup>For a thorough account of the Greek Cypriot members see Marios Lyssiotis, “The Cyprus Legislative Council”, *The Cyprus Review*, Fall 1990, No 2, pp. 55-69.

<sup>157</sup>See Chapter 5.

the Turkish Cypriots. Under these circumstances, and given the absence of a wealthy and progressive elite, the Turkish Cypriots opted for close cooperation with the British in the hope that this would eliminate any danger of *Enosis*. At the same time, the heads of the Turkish Cypriot communal institutions emerged as the prospective leaders of the community, based on their role as religious leaders and claiming legitimization from their appointment by the Ottoman government. The Delegate of the *Evkâf* emerged as the undisputable leader, profiting from the importance of the *Evkâf* for the community, but his close cooperation with the colonial government caused resentment. The emergence of Kemalist Turkey in 1919 altered the balance of power among the Turkish Cypriot community and questioned old certainties.

### CHAPTER 3 - CYPRIOT POLITICS AND SOCIETY UNDER THE BRITISH AND THE BIRTH OF CYPRIOT JOURNALISM

The advent of British colonial administration in Cyprus in 1878 caused political and social changes that greatly affected both communities. As far as the Greek Cypriots are concerned, the withdrawal of the Ottoman administration and its replacement by a Christian power was seen as an opportunity to put forward the *Enosis* agenda. Archbishop Sofronios II greeted the first British administrator, Sir Garnet Wolseley, with the following words: “We accept the change in government inasmuch as we trust that Great Britain will help Cyprus, as it did the Ionian Islands, to be united with Mother Greece, with which it is nationally connected.”<sup>158</sup> Although the Ottoman administration in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century cannot be described as especially harsh, the political change secured in the eyes of the Greek Cypriots an atmosphere of equality that would replace a notion of insecurity and the idea that Christians were in some cases treated as second-class citizens. The administrative reforms introduced by the British included a legislative council that followed the pattern of the Ottoman *Meclis-i İdare*, where mostly wealthy and influential male Cypriots would be elected by a limited electorate. Other reforms affected the legal and judicial system and the tax system, which appeared to be fairer, although it included the Tribute, an annual tax that was to be paid to Istanbul by the British Colonial government but was instead levied upon Cypriot taxpayers.<sup>159</sup> While for the Greek Cypriots the new administration caused hope for social and political change, for the Turkish Cypriots it was a source of worry and resentment. Not only were they considered equal to their Greek Cypriot counterparts, who formed the majority of the population. The reforms of the new administration targeted their privileged position in the state apparatus and they now had to compete on equal terms with the Greek Cypriots, who were in a better financial position.

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<sup>158</sup>Orr, *Cyprus*, p. 160.

<sup>159</sup>For the early stages of the British Administration see Rolandos Katsiaounis, *Labour, Society and Politics in Cyprus during the second half of the nineteenth century* (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 1996); Sir George Hill, *A history of Cyprus, Vol. IV*, (Cambridge, 1952, part II), chs. IX-XII.

The new political conditions allowed the press to flourish. According to Cobham, *Cyprus* was the first newspaper that was printed in 1878, only a few months after the arrival of the first British troops.<sup>160</sup> It was published by Theodoulos Konstantinides, a teacher and publisher who managed to set up the first printing house in Cyprus with the financial support of the Cypriot Brotherhood in Alexandria.<sup>161</sup> Konstantinides also published the first newspaper in Greek, *Neon Kition*, which appeared a year later.<sup>162</sup> In the first editorial, he wrote: “The pen of my journalism will be forever guided by a Greek heart. I neither can, nor wish to hide this”.<sup>163</sup> Two years later in Limassol, the teacher and journalist Aristoteles Palaialogos published the weekly *Alitheia* (Truth). In 1882 in Larnaca, another teacher, Themistocles Theocharides, published the weekly *Stasinos*, which was later renamed *Foni tis Kiprou* (Voice of Cyprus). Another newspaper was published in Limassol in 1884, under the name of *Salpinx* (Trumpet), by teacher and lawyer Stilianos Hourmouzios. And a newspaper bearing the name of Greek Cypriots’ national aspiration, *Enosis* (Union), was published by merchant and teacher Christodoulos Kouppas in Larnaca in 1885.<sup>164</sup> In-between, there were short-lived attempts to print satirical newspapers and magazines that appealed to an audience motivated by the goal of *Enosis* that was propagated through newspaper articles and by school teachers who, educated in Greece, returned to Cyprus and taught more and more students. Already in 1888, there were 241 Greek Cypriot schools with 9,493 students.<sup>165</sup> In 1891, there were 71 Turkish Cypriot schools with 1,869 students.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>160</sup>Claude Delavel Cobham, (ed.), *Excepta Cypria, Materials for a History of Cyprus*, (New York 1908), p. 512.

<sup>161</sup>Rebecca Bryant, *Imagining the Modern: The Cultures of Nationalism in Cyprus*, (London: I.B.Tauris, 2004), p. 33.

<sup>162</sup>For more information on Konstantinides see Aristeides Koudounaris, *Viographicon Lexikon Kiprion 1800-1920*, (Nicosia, 2005), p. 204.

<sup>163</sup>Katsiaounis, p. 96.

<sup>164</sup>For biographical information on the newspaper publishers see Koudounaris, *Viografikon*.

<sup>165</sup>Hüseyin Ağuiçenoğlu, *Zwischen Bindung und Abnabelung: Das “Mutterland” in der Presse der Dobrudscha und der türkischen Zyprioten in postosmanischen Zeit* (Würzburg:Ergon Verlag, 2012), p. 209.

<sup>166</sup>Ulus Irkad, *Kıbrıs Türk Eğitiminde Tarihsel Gelişmeler*, (Lefkoşa 1997), p. 22.

The launch of Turkish Cypriot journalism came rather late. The fate of the Turkish Cypriot press was influenced by local and international politics much more than that of the Greek Cypriot press. The development of Turkish Cypriot nationalism within the time frame of this research can be divided into three stages: the first covers the period from the appearance of the first newspaper until 1914, when no Turkish Cypriot newspaper was published, due to Anglo-Turkish antagonism during the First World War. The second phase covers the period from 1919 until 1931, when a relatively free time for the press came to an abrupt end with the October revolts that allowed the British to impose strict censorship laws on both Greek and Turkish Cypriot newspapers. The third phase covers the period from 1931 until after the end of the Second World War, when the press law and the ban on political activities were gradually lifted. The first phase of Turkish Cypriot journalism consists of attempts to establish a Turkish press that would be able to answer the demands for *Enosis*, which had been propagated by a more vivid and multi-faceted Greek Cypriot press. Most of the Turkish Cypriot newspapers were critical of the Hamidian regime and this often led to their closure. This together with financial hardship and low readership can explain the short life of many titles.

The first Turkish Cypriot newspaper was published by an Armenian under the name of Alexan Sarafian, who had been sent to exile in Egypt in 1880.<sup>167</sup> After the arrival of the British, he moved to Cyprus and started publishing *Ümid* (Hope). It was published in the same printing house as *Cyprus*. After five issues, its publication was ceased under pressure from the Sublime Porte.<sup>168</sup>

Nine year later, in 1889, the second Turkish Cypriot newspaper *Saded* (Scope) appeared. Although Ağuıçenoğlu considers *Ümid* (Hope) to be the first Turkish Cypriot

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<sup>167</sup> Andreas Sofokleous, *Oi Protes Kipriakes Efimerides kai ta Anthropina Dhikeomata ton Ellinon tis Kiprou* (Nicosia: Intercollege, 1994), p. 101.

<sup>168</sup> According to Sofokleous, p. 101, after his newspaper was shut down Sarafian left Cyprus but returned in 1889 to publish another newspaper under the name *Dik el Sharke* (Cock of the East). There's no information on this newspaper in other sources.

newspaper, it has been impossible to establish this, since no issues of the said newspaper exist in archives or private collections.<sup>169</sup> Its publisher, Ahmet Emin Ağa, was a retired official of the Ottoman finance office (*malmüdürlüğü*) that was abolished by the British.<sup>170</sup> *Saded* was short lived – only 16 issues were published, of which none survives.<sup>171</sup>

Two years later, in 1891, *Zaman* (Time) started its publication. It was the third Turkish Cypriot newspaper. It was published by the *Kiraathane-i Osmaniye*, the Ottoman Club of Nicosia, and it was the first serious attempt at the publication of a Turkish Cypriot newspaper. Its publisher was Tüccarbaşı Hacı Ahmet Derviş Efendi, who was apparently illiterate.<sup>172</sup> Its aim was to “evolve the education of the Turks, work for the benefit of the community, pioneer in the maturation and the progress of the nation and abstain from harmful publications of personal hatred. By doing this and staying close to the Ottoman State, the struggle against *Enosis* would be made easier”.<sup>173</sup> It featured articles by various prominent Turkish Cypriots, such as Ali Rifki Efendi, the Mufti, Hafız Ziyai Efendi and the headmaster of the Boys’ Secondary School in Nicosia.<sup>174</sup> It was printed at the first Turkish printing house in Cyprus, where the first book in Turkish was also printed in 1892.<sup>175</sup> *Zaman* was published for nine years and it openly expressed its opposition to Greek Cypriot plans for *Enosis* with Greece. It often featured articles answering the pro-*Enosis* claims that were published in the Greek Cypriot *Fwni tis Kiprou*.<sup>176</sup> Although *Zaman*’s publisher requested and obtained financial help from the Porte in 1892,<sup>177</sup> when the following year the newspaper published an

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<sup>169</sup>Ibid, p. 29.

<sup>170</sup>Cemalettin Ünlü, *Kıbrıs’ta Basın Olayı (1878-1981)* (Ankara: Basın Yayın Genel Müdürlüğü, 1980) p. 16.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid, p.29.

<sup>172</sup>Özcan Mert, “Osmanlı Belgelerine Göre Bir Kıbrıs Gazetesi: Zaman”. Paper presented at the 15. CIEPO Symposium, London, 8-12 July 2002, p. 63.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>174</sup>Beria Remzi Özoran, *Turkish Newspapers and Magazines published in Cyprus 1888-1915*, (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, 1969), p. 7.

<sup>175</sup>Ağuışenoğlu, *Zwischen*, p. 32.

<sup>176</sup>Ünlü, *Kıbrıs*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>177</sup>Mert, p. 66



article about judge Mustafa Fevzi Efendi, the Porte expressed its displeasure.<sup>178</sup> When some of its contributors started voicing pro-Young Turk opinions, the disagreements within the Ottoman Club were also reflected in the newspaper, so much so that the supporters of the Young Turk movement founded another newspaper entitled *Yeni Zaman* (New Time) in 1892. It only published 22 issues and was closed the following year, to be succeeded by *Kıbrıs* (Cyprus). *Kıbrıs* was first published in 1893 and expressed its mission eloquently in its first issue: To face the Greek Cypriot press, to approach facts in a truthful away and not to publish lies, to serve the Turkish culture and the Turkish people and to support the Young Turks" case.<sup>179</sup> Due to its harsh criticism of the Ottoman government, Ottoman officials intervened and managed to shut down the newspaper in 1898.<sup>180</sup>

Ahmet Tevfik Efendi, one of the contributors to *Zaman*, was the editor of the first satirical newspapers in Cyprus. It was published in 1896 under the name *Kokonoz* and its circulation stopped after 22 editions. In 1897, Ahmet Tevfik published another newspaper under the title *Akbaba* (Condor). Its style was somewhat less satirical and it openly criticized the Hamidian regime. The Ottoman authorities sentenced its publisher to death and tried to limit its readership. After 23 editions, *Akbaba* ceased publication.<sup>181</sup>

For one year, no Turkish Cypriot newspaper was published. It was again Ahmet Tevfik Efendi who published *Mir'at-i Zaman* (The Mirror of Times) in 1901. In this journalistic endeavor, too, Ahmet Tevfik sharply criticized the Ottoman government and adopted a pro-Young Turk stance, which may explain the frequent suspensions of publication.<sup>182</sup> *Mir'at-i Zaman* also engaged in a battle with another weekly, *Sünihat* (Manifestations), which was first published in 1906, over the issue of the *Evkâf* and the policy of the British Colonial government regarding their control. As we shall see in the following

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<sup>178</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>180</sup>Bekir Azgın, "The Turkish Cypriot Mass Media", in Klaus-Detlev Grothusen, Winfried Steffani and Peter Zervakis (eds), *Zypern* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), p. 643.

<sup>181</sup>Ağuiçenoğlu, p. 39.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

chapter, this issue would dominate Turkish Cypriot politics and divide the Turkish Cypriot elite and press more in the following years. *Mir'at-i Zaman* was published on and off until 1910.

Another four newspapers would be published in the following years. *Islam* (1907-1909), *Vatan* (Motherland) (1911-1913), *Seyf* (Sword) (1912-1914) and *Kıbrıs* (1913-1914). After the Young Turk revolution in 1908, all newspapers supported the Union and Progress case and gradually introduced the notion of Turkishness to their readers. The gradually increasing Greek Cypriot pressure for *Enosis* did not remain unanswered by the Turkish Cypriot press either, while the *Evkâf* issue continued to divide the community. The outbreak of the First World War inaugurated a period of silence for the Turkish Cypriot press that lasted four years. It seems that the reasons for this were not only political, due to the censorship laws that were enforced because of the Ottoman Empire's decision to enter the war with the Central Powers, but also financial.

### **Newspapers and Coffeehouses – Bringing the News**

The beginning of British rule in Cyprus gave great impetus to the press, but the diffusion of this new medium was not very widespread due to the following reasons: the nature of the language used in both Turkish and Greek Cypriot newspapers, the prevalence of illiteracy, and the cost of a newspaper subscription. As we have seen, the newspaper owners and editors were the “enlightened” men of the time, educated in prestigious schools and universities in Athens, Istanbul or other commercial and cultural centers. The Greek Cypriot newspapers were published in *Katharevousa*, a form of Greek closely connected to Ancient Greek that became the official language of the independent Greek Kingdom. It was incomprehensible to everyday people even in mainland Greece. In Cyprus, it must have sounded even more distant, given that the local dialect uses many local words and idioms. The local Turkish dialect is not that different from mainland Turkish, but the Ottoman Turkish of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was still a bureaucratic language, with many

Arabic and Persian idioms that made it difficult to comprehend for the majority of Turkish Cypriots.<sup>183</sup>

Both communities gave importance to education and actively engaged in opening schools, and they were able to improve literacy rates within one or two decades. According to Bryant, both communities could be considered literate in the definition put forward by Goody.<sup>184</sup> Nevertheless, the first newspapers could only have a limited readership.

Finally, the newspaper must have been a luxury item for the average Cypriot towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Although we do not have a full image of the cost of an annual subscription, the publishers of *Zaman* often asked their readers to pay their subscriptions, as this was the main source of income, and we also know that the readers would often complain about the price of the newspaper.<sup>185</sup>

Despite the aforementioned obstacles, the press soon became a point of reference for local politics. It did so through its presence in a public space par excellence in Cypriot cities and villages, the coffee house.<sup>186</sup> The coffeehouse was the centre of social life. All around the eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans, the coffeehouse was the place where males would meet, discuss the local news and politics, talk about social, political or financial issues, play games and gossip. In Nicosia, but presumably in other cities too, there were different coffee houses for specific purposes: for example, the coffeehouse of *Mehmet Dayı* in the old town of Nicosia was where wedding or circumcision ceremonies took place, and the *Karabülük* coffeehouse was where carriers would park their carriages and wait for their customers.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>183</sup>For the language issues see Bryant, *Educating*, p. 34.

<sup>184</sup>Jack Goody (ed.), *Cultura Escrita en Sociedades Tradicionales* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2003), pp. 50-1.

<sup>185</sup>Ağuiçenoğlu, p. 32.

<sup>186</sup>For more on the coffeehouses see: Ralph Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East*, (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1996); Ekrem Işın, "A Social History of Coffee and Coffeehouses", in Selahattin Özpabıyıklar (ed), *Coffee, Pleasures in a Bean* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001).

<sup>187</sup>Neriman Cahit, *Eski Lefkoşa Kahveleri ve Kahve Kültürü*, (Girne: Şadi Kültür ve Sanat Yayınları, 2001), p. 14.

It was there that the literate members of the community, more often the school teacher or the doctor, would read the news aloud. For instance, teacher Hasan Fadıl Avkan says in his memoirs that he would read the newspaper *Söz* to the villagers of Topçuköy (Ayios Andronikos) in the evenings while he was working there.<sup>188</sup> In most cases, the reader would also have to translate the news into the vernacular form of Greek or Turkish for his public to be able to understand. In this way, the coffee house became the centre of political activity, the opportunity for propaganda or indoctrination, especially for the *Enosis* cause, the stage where politicians tried to win votes for the legislative council elections or where anti-government feeling was expressed.<sup>189</sup>

Since the Cypriot psyche, Turkish or Greek, could not be expressed in the conventional newspapers due to the language used, there were, as we have seen, a few short-lived attempts to publish satirical newspapers that were published in the local dialect. These newspapers were written almost entirely in the Cypriot dialect and often in verse.<sup>190</sup> The first attempt was made by Konstantinides, the publisher of the first newspaper on the island. It was named *Keravnos* (Thunder) and it was published for a short time in 1882.<sup>191</sup> Two years later, *Horkatis* (Villager) was published. It lasted for a year and, according to Koudounaris, it was closed down under pressure from the Cypriot community in Egypt, because they considered the Cypriot dialect brutal.<sup>192</sup> Poet and painter Vasilis Michailidhes published the fortnightly *Dhiavolos* (Devil) for a few months in 1888. The language and style used in the satirical press followed the tradition of the *piitaridhes*, the local oral poets who would express the issues everyday Cypriots were facing or report the local and international news in the local

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<sup>188</sup> Ali, Nesim, (1987), *Batmayan Eğitim Güneşlerimiz*, Lefkoşa, p. 201.

<sup>189</sup> Katsianounis, p. 96.

<sup>190</sup> Bryant, p. 37.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>192</sup> Koudounaris, p. 187.

dialect.<sup>193</sup> Michailides, who is considered one of the greatest Cypriot poets, wrote in fifteen-syllable verses with rhyme. His poems dealt with social, philosophical and romantic themes.

*Kokonoz* was the first Turkish Cypriot satirical newspaper, which was published briefly in 1896, but was soon shut down, partly because of financial issues, partly because of the discontent of the Sublime Porte, due the paper's hostile stance towards the Istanbul government.<sup>194</sup> The satirical newspapers followed the local tradition of folk poetry to which both communities were accustomed. In this early stage of the press in Cyprus, the satirical press would reflect the people's worries, their complaints about British policy or their financial hardships. It was an ideal time for the satirical press to thrive, before the rise of nationalism dissuaded publishers from similar endeavours. Due to the Turkish Cypriots' knowledge of Greek, the Greek Cypriot press and even more the Greek Cypriot satirical press had a readership among both communities.

Despite the shortcomings, censorship and financial difficulties, the press soon became not only an informative medium but also a tool for political indoctrination. While for the Greek Cypriots it served to propagate *Enosis*, for the Turkish Cypriots it became an instrument of the Young Turk movement, though it was also an opportunity to answer Greek Cypriot claims. The First World War deprived the Turkish Cypriots of newspapers for five years. When the first Turkish Cypriot newspaper was published again in 1919, the conditions for both the Greek and the Turkish Cypriot press were very different.

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<sup>193</sup>On the issue of folk poetry see Bryant, pp. 38-39.

<sup>194</sup>Ağuiçenoğlu, p. 38.

## **Cyprus after the First World War – the emergence of a new political and intellectual elite.**

The end of the First World War brought an end to the five-year censorship of the Turkish Cypriot press. New journalistic attempts were urgently needed because of the new challenges the community had to face. On 5 November 1914, Cyprus was officially annexed by Great Britain. In the meantime, Greek Cypriot pro-*Enosis* activities in Cyprus and abroad were a constant source of worry for the Turkish Cypriots. The most important source of worry, though, came from Anatolia. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the occupation of large parts of Anatolia by European powers and the Greek army alarmed the Turkish Cypriots. Under this scope, the traditional pro-British policy of the Turkish Cypriot Elite as the only response to the threat of *Enosis* gradually found its adversary in the form of Turkish nationalism. The Turkish Cypriot elites were divided along these lines already from the beginning of the Turkish War of Independence and the struggle culminated towards the end of the 1920s. Soon after the end of the war, new titles began to appear. *Doğru Yol* (The True Path) and *Söz* (Statement) were the main propagators of Kemalist ideology in Cyprus, while *Ankebut* (Spider), first published in 1920, and *Hakikat* (Truth) were the main advocates of the *Evkâfçılar*, the pro-British group. *Birlik* (Unity), first published in 1924, and *Masum Millet* (Innocent Nation), published in 1931, were the two other newspapers that supported the nationalist cause. Among all these, the most ardent supporter of Turkish nationalism in Turkish Cypriot journalism was Mehmet Remzi Okan.

## **Söz Newspaper**

Mehmet Remzi's journalistic debut took place on 8 September 1919, when *Doğru Yol* (The True Path) started its publication in Nicosia.<sup>195</sup> It was the first Turkish Cypriot newspaper to appear after the ban that was imposed by the colonial authorities during the First World War. Mehmet Remzi was the co-editor, assisted by the lawyer Ahmet Raşit. From the first issue, the publishers vowed to support the Turkish War of Independence and oppose Greek Cypriot demands for *Enosis*. Nevertheless, *Doğru Yol* would often be subjected to the censorship laws that were still in effect. Mehmet Remzi applied for permission to issue another newspaper in case *Doğru Yol* would be shut down and indeed, two years later, he published one of the most influential and certainly the longest-running Turkish Cypriot newspaper under British rule, *Söz* (Statement).<sup>196</sup> From August 1920 until his death in January 1942, the newspaper was published on a weekly basis.<sup>197</sup> In order to ensure the continuous publication of the newspaper in case of closure due to censorship, Mehmet Remzi registered *Söz* with the colonial government. All through the 1920s, it was published every Thursday in four broadsheet pages. The first page was usually reserved for one or more editorial pieces by Mehmet Remzi. The remaining pages were reserved for local news, reports from the provincial capitals (e.g. Famagusta) and Turkey. In case there was no news from Cyprus, the first page was devoted to news about Turkey and more specifically about Turkish foreign policy. *Söz* had the biggest circulation with approximately 1,200 copies throughout the 1920s, with *Hakikat* coming second.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>195</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>196</sup>Beria Remzi Özoran, "Anadolu Kurtuluş Savaşı Yıllarında Kıbrıs'ta Türk Basını", in *VII Türk Tarih Kongresi, Ankara 25-29 Eylül 1970: Kongreye Sunular Bildiriler, II Cilt* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1973), pp. 913-14.

<sup>197</sup>Oktay Öksüzöğlü, *Mehmet Remzi Okan*, Lefkoşa: (Gog Yayınları, 1990), p. 60.

<sup>198</sup>Cyprus Blue Book, 1922-1931.

Mehmet Remzi was born in 1885 and, after graduating from *Mektep-i idadiye* in Nicosia, he started working as a teacher. On the eve of the First World War, Remzi was head-teacher at the Sarayönü Boys School in Nicosia.<sup>199</sup> One of his students remembers how Mehmet Remzi instilled love for the Turkish flag in his students.<sup>200</sup> After the end of the war, Remzi turned down a teaching job in the city of Paphos and devoted himself to journalism. In *Söz*, Mehmet Remzi continued the endeavour he had initiated through the editorial line of *Doğru Yol*, that of support of the Kemalist forces. During the later years of the Turkish war of independence, *Söz* undertook the task of encouraging and boosting the morale of the Turkish Cypriots. On the editorial of 5 September 1921 under the title “Difficult Days”, Mehmet Remzi commented on the broadcast of a Greek news agency that Ankara had been occupied by Greek forces:

The publications of the Greek press and the information of the Athens News Agency report that, since a couple of days ago, Ankara too has been occupied by the Greek army. If we believe that these opinions are correct and accept for a second that these events have occurred, we cannot consider that the war has come to an end and we cannot regard it as possible that the Western countries shall not intervene. That is because the Anatolian Turks are fighting to defend their existence and independence. We do not think that the allies that deluge the nations that admirably defend their freedom and independence will adopt decisions that will deprive the Turks of their right to fight in this good cause.<sup>201</sup>

The outcome of the Greek-Turkish war in Anatolia was worrying the Turkish Cypriot community, as it was feared that a strong Greek presence in Anatolia would have serious implications for the future of the community in Cyprus. In order to ease the worries arising

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<sup>199</sup>Nesim Ali, *Batmayan*, p. 79.

<sup>200</sup>Öksüzoğlu, *Mehmet Remzi*, p. 59.

<sup>201</sup>Sabahattin İsmail & Ergin Birinci, *Atatürk döneminde Türkiye-Kıbrıs İlişkileri*, İstanbul: Akdeniz Haber Ajansı Yayınları, 1989, p. 62. After research in archives in both South and North Cyprus it was impossible to find any editions of *Söz* before 1926. All articles until that date are collected from various sources and are translated by the author.



from Greek war propaganda, *Söz* published a series of articles attempting to maintain the community's faith in the Kemalist forces. The difficulty of obtaining objective and accurate information from the war in Anatolia and the need of the Turkish Cypriot community to keep faith in the Kemalist movement led many Turkish Cypriots to support *Söz* and Mehmet Remzi. From 1921, the newspaper was sent to the Turkish Association (Türk Derneği) in Nicosia.<sup>202</sup> His services were acknowledged by the Kemalist regime in a complimentary letter signed by the General Director of the Press and Information office.<sup>203</sup>

Until the beginning of the Turkish war for independence, the Turkish Cypriot elite had adopted a pro-British policy in order to secure its position in relation to the colonial administration and as a reaction against the demands for *Enosis*. As a result, the *Evkâf*, the main Turkish Cypriot institution and source of wealth for the community, had come under the control of the colonial government. Through his articles, Mehmet Remzi started to challenge this policy and, after the successful outcome of the war and the prevalence of the Kemalist forces, he considered loyalty to the British harmful to the Turkish Cypriots. He believed that the Turkish Cypriots should adopt all the Kemalist reforms and foster strong ties with the motherland.

The end of the War of Independence was celebrated by the Turkish Cypriots and *Söz* commented extensively on the importance of the victory of the Kemalist forces for the Turkish Cypriot community. Indeed, it was thought that the defeat of Greek nationalism in Anatolia would hold back Greek Cypriot demands for *Enosis*. Soon after, the launch of the secular reforms was not only positively commented upon, but Mehmet Remzi often published long editorials asking persistently for the implementation of the reforms and insisting on the need for the Turkish Cypriot community to follow the path of modernization.

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<sup>202</sup>Öksüzoğlu, *Mehmet*, p. 49.

<sup>203</sup>Ünlü, p. 59.

Furthermore, the successful first steps of the Turkish Republic strengthened the feeling of Turkish sentiment among the Turkish Cypriot community and provided the impetus for Mehmet Remzi to engage dynamically in the diffusion of Turkishness and the Kemalist ideas. When Sait Molla, one of the *yüzellilikler*,<sup>204</sup> arrived in Cyprus in May 1925, Mehmet Remzi expressed his discontent. Although Sait Molla tried to convince the Turkish Cypriot intellectuals that there were no political motives hidden behind his arrival in Cyprus, Remzi Okan, as well as the publisher of *Birlik*, Hacı Bulgurzâde Ahmet Hulusi, investigated Sait Molla's activities in Egypt and pointed out his treacherous stance towards his motherland (*vatana ihanet*).<sup>205</sup> It seems that Sait Molla did not abstain from political activities. As a result, Mehmet Remzi published a series of articles attacking Sait Molla. Sait Molla tried to respond to these allegations, although he did not manage to have his announcements published in the Turkish Cypriot press. When he dismissed the Turkish Cypriot newspapers as "rags" (*paçavra*), Mehmet Remzi published an article in *Söz* on 17 November 1925, under the title "Molla infected everything" (*Molla her tarafı bulaştırdı*) where he attacked Sait Molla:

[...] You cursed fellow. If we flee we will go to Turkey and live among our people. But you; you are disgraced, bloody handed, dirty. One day you will definitely leave from here, we're expecting that day. Where will you go? What is your nation and which is your homeland? (...) This is certain: Wherever Molla goes, the Turk's revenge will be personified sometimes in the form of Raşit,<sup>206</sup> sometimes in the form of Remzi and he will suffer with regret as they throw in his face his abominable deeds. If he does not feel anything because of unscrupulousness [they will] uncover his malice and they will spoil his plans and he will always live in pain and suffering. Molla and his companions may struggle as much as they want, they may hit their brainless heads here and there, they may even slither through the mud like poisonous snakes. Their poison will

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<sup>204</sup>The *Yüzellilikler* were one hundred and fifty personalities that were exempt from the amnesty granted by the Turkish state after the proclamation of the Republic and were thus exiled. See Hakan Özoğlu, *Cumhuriyetin Kuruluşunda İktidar Kavgası: 150'likler, Takrir-i Sükun ve İzmir Suikasti*, (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2011).

<sup>205</sup>Mehmet Demiryürek, "Kıbrıs'ta Bir 150'lik: Sait Molla (1925-1930)", *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, XIX (54), 2003, pp. 1213-38.

<sup>206</sup>Ahmet Raşit, publisher of *Doğru Yol* newspaper.

only burn their filthy selves. Because the Turkish nation has been saved from their kind and in order to be completely safe from their evilness they put a black stamp on their faces and sent them to exile. Sait Molla may become as furious as he wants. Like a venomous dog he may greedily eat his own body. His fuss will have no impact, neither here nor in Turkey. We know what lies behind his cries and as we hear them we feel pleasure instead of mercy as we take our revenge.<sup>207</sup>

The language and the style may seem quite offensive, but Mehmet Remzi often used such a tone when attacking his opponents in his editorials. A few months later, on 3 April 1926, with an article entitled “Attention, there are mischievous intriguers among us” (*İçimizde hain müfsitler var, dikkat*), Mehmet Remzi attacked Sait Molla once again. Only this time, he accused him of espionage in favour of Greece. The latter brought suit against the publisher that resulted in a two-month jail sentence.<sup>208</sup>

The openly pro-Kemalist stance was again acknowledged and rewarded. Shortly after the opening of the Turkish Consulate in Larnaca in June 1925, the consul Mr. Assaf Bey met with journalists Hacıbulgurzade Ahmet Hulusi, editor of the weekly *Birlik*, Ahmed Raşid and Mehmet Remzi and promised them financial assistance from the Turkish government.<sup>209</sup> In the same meeting, the consul stated the Turkish government’s satisfaction with Turkish Cypriot journalism. It is interesting that the editor of the third important weekly *Hakikat* (Truth), which kept a moderate stance towards the Kemalist regime, was not invited to the meeting. Mehmet Remzi opted for Turkish nationality in 1926, a right that was given to Turkish Cypriots through the Lausanne Treaty.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Söz, 17/11/1925, quoted in Demiryürek, p. 1216.

<sup>208</sup> Öksüzoğlu, p. 14.

<sup>209</sup> Ahmet An, *Kıbrıs Türk Liderliğinin Oluşması (1900 – 1942)*, Lefkoşa: Galeri Kültür Yayınları, 1997, p. 77.

<sup>210</sup> FCO141/2426.

Mehmet Remzi published a lot about the “hat revolution” (*şapka devrimi*), advocating the implementation in Cyprus of the Kemalist reforms that provided for the abolition of the fez. On 17 October 1925, he wrote:

Until yesterday we were trying to preserve our peculiarity and rejected the headgear that is used by all civilized nations by considering it a curse. It wasn't deemed necessary to wear a hat out of fear of looking like Europeans. Because by wearing the hat we will look like our brothers in Turkey from which we're no different. I've heard that many of our young people are preparing to wear a hat on the Day of the Republic. From the letters we receive from the provinces we understand that there too on that day many young people will follow Kemal Paşa by wearing a hat.<sup>211</sup>

With the pretext of the implementation in Cyprus of the language reform, Mehmet Remzi met with Mustafa Kemal himself and secured some financial support in order to print *Söz* in the new Turkish alphabet.<sup>212</sup> Already from the beginning of 1929, *Söz* began publishing its title and later in the same year some short articles or just their titles in the new alphabet. Gradually, the whole newspaper was published in the new alphabet.

All through 1928, *Söz* published a series of reports on the language reform from Turkey and editorials emphasizing the need for the full implementation of the reforms. In the editorial of 13 September 1928 entitled “It is our task to take up the new letters”, Mehmet Remzi adopted the language reform:

With the new Turkish letters established and approved by the Language Committee, capital and small, everyone will read and write and our beautiful Turkish [language] shall be rescued without any riddle. The success of this part of the sacred revolution is very important and comprehensive. For with that [the new Turkish alphabet] it's not only the

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<sup>211</sup>*Söz*, 17/10/1925 from Nesim Ali, *Batmayan*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>212</sup>Bülent Evre, *Kıbrıs Türk Milliyetçiliği: Oluşumu ve Gelişimi*, Işık Kitabevi Yayınları: Lefkoşa, 2004, p. 68.

Turks of Turkey who are saved, the millions of Turks living in the four corners of the world and are unfortunately sentenced to remain ignorant by not getting a share of Turkish education shall be illuminated and with the light and enlightenment they will attain their self esteem. After ten years Turks everywhere will one way or another read and write and there is no doubt that they will reflect one way or another. It's that simple [...]<sup>213</sup>

It is evident that Söz had fully adopted the Kemalist cause and, moreover, had taken up the task of enlightening the Turkish Cypriot community. Towards the end of the 1920s, the position of the Kemalists had been consolidated among the Turkish Cypriots and Söz claimed a leading role in the process of transforming an Ottoman Muslim community into an ethnic Turkish one. Towards this aim, all Turkish national holidays were celebrated by the Turkish Cypriots. On the first page of Söz on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 1931, the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, we read:

Turks all around the world are feeling a wave of joy coming from the grandeur and the elevation of this day and they manifest this joy without breaking the laws of the countries where they are living. And the Turkish children living in the motherland are celebrating this day in a more joyful, more dignified and more independent way, in safety and purity given by their fathers' clean blood [...] When their joyful laughter and the shining gleam from the national holiday reflect to us, we are glad too and we feel joy and gratitude. Because we know that this is our holiday, our joyful day.<sup>214</sup>

The emergence of a nationalist political elite and its consolidation in power lasted throughout the 1920s. Despite the attacks against British policy on the *Evkâf* issue and the promotion of Turkish nationalism, the old guard, the *Evkâfçılar*, or supporters of the colonial

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<sup>213</sup>PIO, Söz, 13 September 1928.

<sup>214</sup>PIO, Söz, 29 October 1931.

government, managed to win the 1925 elections for the Legislative Council.<sup>215</sup> Mehmet Münir Bey won the elections for the 1<sup>st</sup> Electoral District for Nicosia and Kyreneia and, together with various other positions that he held in the colonial government and the Turkish Cypriot community, the most important being the *Evkâf* delegate, he became the number one target for *Söz* and the other Kemalist forces. During the following five years, Mehmet Münir was targeted for his devotion to the British colonial government and his almost absolute control over the community's institutions. Remzi Okan fought vigorously for the election of nationalist Mehmet Necati Özkan in the 1930 elections for the Legislative Council, which meant the end of Münir Bey's undisputed control over the community. Necati Özkan published his articles in *Söz* and the newspaper advertised extensively the Turkish Cypriot National Congress that took place a year later and was organized by Necati Özkan and his friends. *Söz* engaged in an often aggressive confrontation with the rather conservative *Hakikat* over these two issues. Through his articles, Mehmet Remzi considered himself the defender of Kemalist ideology in Cyprus and saw it as a task to fight all opposing views.

Following the Kemalist pattern, *Söz* focused on the need of the Turkish Cypriot community to modernize, not only in order to follow the Turkish example, but most importantly in order to be able to compete with the Greek Cypriots. In other words, the modernization of the community was thought to be the answer for all political and financial hardships.

Indicative of Remzi's perception of his role as an instructor of the Turkish Cypriot community is his reaction to the participation of Turkish Cypriots in the Communist movement of Cyprus. In an article entitled "The stray lambs are eaten by the wolf" (*Sürüden ayrılanı kurt yer*), Mehmet Remzi makes the following comment:

[...] Nevertheless, the Turks that added their names under any circumstance to the Bolshevik lists, intentionally or unintentionally, have caused great harm to their own community. We know that there is no

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<sup>215</sup>SA1:679/1925, 2.

religion or ethnicity in Bolshevism. [...] From what we have read in the Greek Cypriot newspapers we understand there are about 60 teachers who engage with the Bolsheviks. Nevertheless, there is no Turkish teacher. This is very good for us and it is a good proof that the Turkish community has no intervention in the Bolshevik movement. [...] It is not a defect or a fault of the community if one or two Turks have been carried away by communist propaganda and have turned away from us. But if some have turned away from us and have followed dark paths, there should be no doubt that those who leave the flock get eaten by the wolf.<sup>216</sup>

Remzi assumed the role of the teacher and parent of his readers, adopting a discourse that combines sermon and reprimand towards those who “stray from the righteous path” of Turkish nationalism.

### **Hakikat – the official organ of the *Evkâfçılar***

*Hakikat* was published from 1923 to 1933 and was the second-best selling newspaper after *Söz*.<sup>217</sup> Why is it, then, that the official history ignores *Hakikat*? The answer, I argue, lies in the newspaper’s political stance. Unlike *Söz*, *Hakikat* never supported the Kemalist cause. This, however, does not mean that it campaigned against Kemalism. It just remained loyal to the *Evkâfçılar* and insisted on the importance of good relations with the colonial government. As we’ve seen, the newspaper’s first edition was published on May 12, 1923. It was published by Derviş Ali Remmal and the editor was Mehmet Fikri Yağmur.<sup>218</sup> Derviş Ali Remmal was born in 1852. He was active in commerce before opening a printing house in Larnaca. Remmal was the publisher of weekly *Ankebut* (Spider), which was published from 1920 to 1923.<sup>219</sup> From 1920 until 1933, he was the publisher of *Hakikat*, which was published in Larnaca until 1930 and in the *Hakikat* printing house in Nicosia thereafter.

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<sup>216</sup>*Söz*, 18/8/1931, pp. 1-2.

<sup>217</sup>From 1923 to 1927 *Hakikat* sold 1000 copies per week while *Söz* had a circulation of 1200 copies. From 1927 to 1930 both newspapers sold 1000 copies per week while in 1931 *Hakikat* had a circulation of 420 copies compared to 470 of *Söz*. See The Cyprus Blue Book, 1923-1931.

<sup>218</sup>Orhan Turan, *Tarihten Günümüze Kıbrıs Türk Basını (1879-2009)* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2013) p. 80.

<sup>219</sup>Ahmet An, *Kıbrıs’ın Yetiştirdiği Değerler (1782-1899)* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 2002) p. 152.

Mehmet Fikri Yağmur was born in Larnaca in 1900. Together with Derviş Ali Remmal, he published *Ankebut* and *Hakikat*. After the latter's publication ceased in 1932, he took over the printing house and named it Mehmet Fikri. Various Turkish Cypriot newspapers were published in his printing house and he was also the publisher of short-lived *Haber* (1934-1925).<sup>220</sup>

The available editions of *Hakikat* at the National Archives in Keryneia cover the years 1923-1926 and 1931-1933. It is, hence, difficult to trace the political side that the newspaper chose over the years. Moreover, the biographies of the publishers do not highlight the reasons that the newspaper sided with the *Evkâfçılar* towards the end of the 1920s.

*Hakikat* covered the official holidays of the Turkish Republic by publishing photos of Kemal Atatürk and İsmet İnönü accompanied by celebratory comments. In that sense, its political stance in the early stages did not vary significantly from that of *Söz*. With the rise in power of Mehmet Münir and especially when the nationalists started attacking the *Evkâf* administration, the newspaper accused Necati Özkan of attempting to harm the community's good relations with the government. In an article published on August 1, 1931, the newspaper accused the nationalist opposition of having adopted a contradictory attitude regarding the religious institutions:

In the leading article of this issue the changeable attitude and the contradictory claims of the Opposition are set out as follows: They formerly asked for the abolition of the Sheri Courts and of the Muftiship, and for the introduction of certain reforms. They also declared that they considered it an insult to be called as Moslems. After a short time they undertook the protection of the Moslem religious institutions, and elected a Mufti. This is nothing but anarchy. The Government appears to be too much tolerant towards them. But we think that it is the duty of the Government to protect the dignity of individuals and of institutions, and to make them understand that there is a limit to Liberty and to the Liberty of the Press.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>220</sup>Ibid. *Kıbrıs'ın Yetiştirdiği Değerler (1900-1920)* (Girne: Şadı Kültür ve Sanat Yayınları, 2005) p. 11-12.

<sup>221</sup>SA1, 950.1926, *Hakikat*, 492, 1/9/1931.



*Hakikat* argued that the nationalists were contradicting themselves in demanding that the government handed the administration of the religious institutions back to the community. The main line of argument was that it was the nationalists themselves who had requested the abolition of these institutions in the past. The most interesting part of this article, though, is the use of religion as a weapon against the nationalists. The newspaper implied that Necati Özkan and the other members of the nationalist party insulted the Muslim religion with their actions. In the end, the newspaper appealed to the government for support. This was a common feature in *Hakikat*'s articles.

On the contrary, *Hakikat* seldom referred to Kemalist ideology and the secular reforms. Indicative of this is the newspaper's publication in Ottoman Turkish even in 1933, 5 years after the Language Reform was introduced. The newspaper published only its title and the titles of some articles in Latin letters, as well as the advertisements. On the contrary, *Söz* was published already from 1931 exclusively in the new Turkish alphabet.

I will not include more articles from *Hakikat*, given that I have used many more in other chapters that give an idea of the newspaper's political and ideological stance. In all, *Hakikat* adopted a pro-government attitude and supported loyalty to the government. Its attitude towards the Kemalist revolution in Turkey was rather ambivalent. On the one hand, the newspaper praised the founders of modern Turkey in official holidays, but it also abstained from referring to the Turkish Cypriots' need to adopt the Kemalist reforms. Support for the *Evkâf* administration was strong, but there is no evidence that links the newspaper to the *Evkâf* or to Mehmet Münir. After *Hakikat* ceased its publication in 1933, the *Evkâfçılar* were left without any newspaper to promote their policies.

### **Emigration to Turkey and the attitude of the press**

The issue of Turkish Cypriot emigration to Turkey in the 1920s is a quite interesting topic in Cypriot history. According to Article 21 of the Lausanne Treaty, Turkish nationals

residing on the island on 5 November 1914 would acquire British nationality. They were given, however, “the right to opt for Turkish nationality within two years from the coming into force of the present treaty, provided that they leave Cyprus within twelve months after having so opted”.<sup>222</sup> Republican Turkey was eager to welcome Turkish populations from the Balkans and elsewhere in order to boost the economy in underpopulated areas.<sup>223</sup> The Turkish government opened a consulate in Larnaca in 1925 in order to facilitate migration to Turkey.<sup>224</sup> The first Turkish consul, Asaf Bey, seems to have encouraged the Turkish Cypriots to migrate by advertising the opportunities that were awaiting them in Turkey.<sup>225</sup> For Turkish Cypriots, migration could offer a way out of poverty, although the risks attached were not negligible. The Colonial Government, on the other hand, could not pose obstacles to those who decided to migrate, even though the exodus of a large number of Turkish Cypriots could have weakened its position towards Greek Cypriot arguments for *Enosis*.

Turkish Cypriot emigration to Turkey started in 1924 and continued after the period provided by the Lausanne Treaty. The Turkish government had reserved areas in southern Anatolia that could accommodate about 20,000 Turkish Cypriots. Furthermore, Turkish Cypriots could also settle in big cities such as in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir or Bursa.<sup>226</sup> The main reasons that drove the Turkish Cypriots to migrate are the following: the wish for a more secure and stable life in Turkey; the thought that they could provide a better future for their children; the scarcity of arable land and the frequent droughts in Cyprus; feelings of devotion to Turkey; the desire to free themselves from Greek Cypriot domination on an economic level; the lack of Turkish higher education institutions in Cyprus; and the wish of the younger

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<sup>222</sup>Lausanne Peace Treaty. Available from: <http://treaties.fco.gov.uk/docs/pdf/1923/TS0016-1.pdf>. (Accessed on April, 14<sup>th</sup> 2015).

<sup>223</sup>Soner Cagaptay, “Passage to Turkishness: Immigration and Religion in Modern Turkey” in Haldun Gölalp (ed.) *Citizenship and Ethnic Conflict: Challenging the Nation-State*, (Abingdon: 2006), p. 65-6.

<sup>224</sup>Georghallides, *A political*, p. 413.

<sup>225</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>226</sup>Fahriye Emgili, “Kıbrıs’tan Türkiye’ye Yapılan Göçlerin Kıbrıs Türk Basımına Yansımaları (1923-1938)” *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, Güz 2013, Sayı 39, pp. 118-9

generation to receive higher education in Turkey.<sup>227</sup> According to an article published in *Söz* in 1926, the Turkish Cypriot population could be divided into the following social groups: land and property owners, government officials, self-employed, craft workers, tradespeople and workers.<sup>228</sup> It was the self-employed, craft workers, tradespeople and workers who were facing the greatest hardship. Hence, they were the ones who were most likely to choose migration as an option.

In a letter addressed to the Turkish prime minister, İsmet İnönü, the headmaster of the secondary school of the village of Kaleburnu on the Karpas peninsula, Ahmet Celal, requested that the Turkish government allocated land to those Turkish Cypriots who wished to settle in Turkey. The author expressed the fear that, if the Turkish Cypriots remained in Cyprus, their Turkishness would gradually be lost and they would not have access to Turkish schools and Turkish culture.<sup>229</sup>

The Turkish Cypriot press and elite were not unanimously in favour of the prospect of migration to Turkey. Legislative Council member Musa İrfan bey criticized those Turkish Cypriots who opted to migrate by implying that they were “led to believe that they would live in a fool’s paradise in Asia Minor”.<sup>230</sup> The weekly *Birlik* published an article in August 1926, when the time-limit for emigration to Turkey was about to expire. In it, the publisher, Ahmet Cevdet, maintained that Turkish Cypriot immigration to Turkey was not in Turkey’s interest. “The Turks, by remaining on the island, by increasing in numbers, by acquiring property through hard work, can be of benefit to Turkey. If the island remains in the hands of the Greeks, this means that one day the island will belong to Greece. [...] We cannot see any reason that leads the Muslims that live here to migrate. What benefit can come of this? [...]

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<sup>227</sup>Zafer Çakmak, “Kıbrıs’tan Anadolu’ya Türk Göçü (1878-1938)” *Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 36 (Erzurum, 2008), p. 210.

<sup>228</sup>Emgili, “Kıbrıs’tan”, pp. 120-1.

<sup>229</sup>Hikmet Öksüz, “Lozan’dan sonra Kıbrıs Türkleri’nin Anavatanına Göçleri”, *Tarih ve Toplum*, 187, Temmuz 1999, p. 38.

<sup>230</sup>Çakmak, “Kıbrıs’tan”, p. 412.

By migrating without reason, they ruin their families, their property and their health”.<sup>231</sup> The pro-Kemalist *Söz*, on the other hand, encouraged Turkish Cypriots to migrate to Turkey. In an article published in 1926, the newspaper expressed its gratitude to the Turkish Consul, Asaf Bey, for facilitating Turkish Cypriot migration to Turkey.<sup>232</sup> On another occasion, though, the newspaper emphasized the need for the Turkish Cypriots who chose to remain on the island to unite and organize.<sup>233</sup> During the period provided by the Treaty (1924-1926), 9,130 travel documents were issued to Turkish Cypriots, but it is estimated that only about 2,500-3,000 persons used the right to migrate.<sup>234</sup> Many of those who opted to migrate and obtained Turkish passports did not make use of their right within twelve months, as the Lausanne Treaty allowed, and were pressured to abandon the island by the colonial government.<sup>235</sup> The reason for this was that these persons had acquired Turkish passports and, by not abandoning the island, the issue of their nationality arose. The colonial government claimed that these persons had lost their Turkish nationality. The issue was complicated due to a misunderstanding that arose from the misinterpretation of the Lausanne Treaty on behalf of the Colonial Government. After consulting with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the government issued a statement whereby those Turkish Cypriots who had opted for Turkish nationality but had not moved to Turkey within the period provided by the Treaty of Lausanne had not lost their Turkish nationality. This resulted in another issue for the government: the approximately 6,000 Turkish Cypriots with Turkish nationality who had not migrated to Turkey could constitute a community of Turkish nationals in Cyprus.<sup>236</sup> The government was faced with the dilemma of asking these Turkish Cypriots to migrate or allowing them to remain in Cyprus. The difficulties that the Turkish Cypriots faced in Turkey

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<sup>231</sup>Emgili, “Kıbrıs’tan Türkiye’ye”, pp. 121-2.

<sup>232</sup>Ibid. p.118.

<sup>233</sup>Ibid. p.110.

<sup>234</sup>Ibid. p. 416.

<sup>235</sup>Ibid. p. 114.

<sup>236</sup>McHenry, pp.167-170.

led many of those who had migrated to return to Cyprus and explains the reluctance of those who had opted for Turkish nationality to migrate.

Migration to Turkey continued in smaller numbers after 1926 with or without legal documents. In 1934, 142 Turkish Cypriots from the area of Karpas emigrated to Turkey, while there were reports that Turkish Cypriots from three villages in Famagusta district had applied to the Turkish Consulate for visas in order to immigrate to Turkey.<sup>237</sup> Concerned by this wave of Turkish Cypriot migration, the government decided to impose a £10 passport fee, hoping in this way to dissuade the Turkish Cypriots who wished to migrate.<sup>238</sup> As Turkish emigration to Turkey continued, albeit in smaller numbers, the issue continued to divide the community. For example, in an article by Judge Mehmet Zekâ, we learn that, in 1937, some Turkish Cypriots attempted to migrate to Turkey illegally by boat. Zekâ was against emigration, but maintained that the conditions of living for the Turkish Cypriots had become so difficult that he could not blame the Turkish Cypriots who decided to seek a better future in Turkey.<sup>239</sup> Mehmet Remzi reacted to Mehmet Zekâ's encouraging of emigration with the following words: "Emigration to Anatolia must be the last action and the last movement to salvation".<sup>240</sup> The author, however, admitted that he had encouraged through his articles "those who were in distress to migrate to Turkey and had published long articles in this connection". I argue that this constitutes a quite controversial behaviour. The period that the author refers to is 1924-1926. At a time when the Turkish Cypriots made up approximately 19% of the total population, that is about 64,000,<sup>241</sup> encouraging the emigration of members of the community could only cause the weakening of the community's position vis-à-vis the Greek Cypriots and the colonial government. How, then, can one justify Remzi Okan's attitude? This controversy can be attributed to the enthusiasm that was caused by Turkish nationalism. Remzi Okan was, as we have seen, an ardent Kemalist and Turkish nationalist

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<sup>237</sup>Ibid, p. 192.

<sup>238</sup>Ibid, p. 195.

<sup>239</sup>FCO141/2426, article by Mehmet Zekâ in Sözcü, 14/8/1937.

<sup>240</sup>FCO141/2426, article by Mehmet Okan in Sözcü, 18/8/1937.

<sup>241</sup>Çakmak, p. 205.

and he considered it his task to support the “motherland” at all costs, although that was harmful to the interests of his native community. We can also assume that Remzi Okan was worried about the conditions that the Turkish Cypriots were facing and considered emigration to Turkey their only way out of the difficulties and economic hardship.

*Hakikat*, contrary to *Söz*, did not support the emigration of Turkish Cypriots to Turkey. When the issue came up again in the agenda, the newspaper published an article accusing lawyer Fadıl Niyazi (Korkut) of encouraging emigration:

This question was raised five years ago, but the leaders at that time were neither the Masum Millet nor Fadıl Niyazi bey. The *Söz* and a few persons supporting it were encouraging this idea, and many persons were persuaded to emigrate. In consequence of this encouragement, hundreds of men, women and children emigrated, selling their properties at ridiculous prices, and as they were not prepared and equipped for emigration most of them were ruined. But, those who described emigration as the Door of Happiness, the Editor of *Söz* and his friends, did not move from their places. They kept back, strengthened their position by obtaining British Nationality and [...]feasted on the corpses of the men they ruined.

And now Fadıl Niyazi bey began to lay open this old wound. I’m not going to reply to his open letter to His Excellency the Acting Governor. He is at liberty to submit his thoughts and ideas to the Government, but it is tragic to see him saying: “You will either accept these, or we shall emigrate”. First of all, what does the Government care if we do emigrate? Why should the Government be afraid of our emigration and admit the claims put forward, simply because of this threat? Secondly, supposing the Government rejected those claims and Fadıl Niyazi Bey gave the command of Emigration, how many persons will obey to that command? Thirdly, assuming that some persons obeyed to it, is he not going to see them off and remain in Cyprus as a British Subject just like the former propagandists? But above all, he must know that this Community will never follow this ill advice. The Moslem people of Cyprus will never go away leaving behind under the feet the sacred tomb of Umm Haram, the Prophet’s aunt, and will never give an opportunity to others to put bells on St. Sophia and other mosques. This is the destination of the policy followed by Fadıl Bey and his colleagues. But, the Moslem Community is not of the same opinion and it has always been understood that this is not desired even by Turkey.<sup>242</sup>

*Hakikat* portrays the Evkâfçılar as a responsible and sensible power while accusing the opposition of irresponsible actions. The issue of emigration is indeed indicative of the

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<sup>242</sup>SA1 950/1926 *Hakikat*, 486, 20/6/1931

contradictions of the nationalist party. Earlier in this chapter, we saw how *Söz* and Remzi Okan accused Mehmet Zekâ of supporting emigration to Turkey, when it was the newspaper that encouraged Turkish Cypriots to emigrate in the mid-1920s. In this article, *Hakikat* accused the nationalists of encouraging emigration without warning the people of the dangers they were going to face. The article proceeds with a serious accusation that those who encouraged emigration may have benefited at the expense of the emigrants. Finally, the article concludes with the most crucial argument against emigration – that it could eliminate the Turkish Cypriot presence on the island. And in order to emphasise its concern, the article refers to the tomb of Umm Haram, the most sacred Muslim place in Cyprus. Reference to the religious sentiment of the Turkish Cypriots was frequent in *Hakikat*'s articles, which is a point that differentiates it from *Söz*.

## **Conclusions**

The beginning of British rule in Cyprus facilitated the flourishing of the press. The first to appear were the Greek Cypriot newspapers that promoted the claim of *Enosis* with Greece. The Turkish Cypriot press attempted to answer these claims, but at the same time provided an opportunity for the Young Turks who had fled from Istanbul to criticize the Ottoman government.

The Turkish war for independence and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey were crucial for the national awakening of the Turkish Cypriot community. This chapter has demonstrated the conditions under which the Turkish Cypriot elite embraced the Kemalist reforms. Being one of the three major Turkish Cypriot newspapers in the 1920s, *Söz* soon became the most devoted supporter of Kemalist ideology among the Turkish Cypriots. Presenting the issues that impeded the modernization of the Turkish Cypriot community, *Söz* tried to emphasize the issues that were holding back the Turkish Cypriot community and

attempted to boost the morale of the Turkish Cypriots, in order to be able to counterbalance the Greek Cypriots' numerical and economic advantage. At the same time, the newspaper promoted the Kemalist reforms and answered, often harshly, the opponents of the Kemalist movement. Towards the end of the 1920s, the newspaper fully supported the nationalist political movement. On the other hand, Remzi Okan's enthusiasm for Turkish nationalism was at times harmful for his community, as the case of Turkish Cypriot migration to Turkey proved.

*Hakikat*, on the other hand, was the official organ of the *Evkâfçılar*. It followed a pro-government line, supporting the *Evkâf* administration and the British policy of centralization of Muslim institutions. Unlike *Söz*, it did not promote the Kemalist cause, and at times it was against the secularization process. The newspaper adopted a more moderate stance with regard to its opponents and insisted on cooperation with the government, no matter what the cost for the community. Its support of the government's policy on the religious institutions was contradictory, given that the dependency of the *Evkâf* or the Mufti on a non-Muslim government was against Islamic religious practice.

In the period that followed the October 1931 disturbances, the Turkish Cypriot press continued its work, but the censorship laws that were applied by the colonial government limited the opportunities of newspapers like *Söz* to publish anti-government and pro-Turkish articles. *Hakikat* was published until 1933, while *Söz* continued until Remzi Okan's death in 1942. His daughter attempted to continue with the publication of the newspaper in 1943, but their endeavors lasted only until 1946.<sup>243</sup> *Söz*'s services to the nationalist movement were significant. In the 21 years since it had first been published, *Söz* had systematically propagated the ideals of Turkish nationalism. In the 1940s, conditions were ripe for the nationalists to compete with the Greek Cypriots.

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<sup>243</sup>Turan, *Tarihten Günümüze*, p. 77.



## CHAPTER 4 - MEHMET MÜNİR AND NECATİ ÖZKAN: THE *EVKÂFÇI* AGAINST THE KEMALIST

As we saw in the previous chapter, three principal factors shaped Turkish Cypriot identity under British rule: first, the ideological debates in the Ottoman public sphere, namely the conflict between Ottomanism and pan-Islamism; second, the late emergence of Turkish nationalism as a result of these debates; and, third, Greek Cypriot irredentism and the fear for the survival of the community due to the Cretan precedent. These three factors had an impact on the evolution of the Turkish Cypriot leadership. With the arrival of the British in 1878, the Turkish Cypriots not only lost the status of the ruling element. They were limited to the status of a minority, administered by a Christian power. The Legislative Council was a first step towards a representative government, but it played a rather minimal part in Cypriot politics, since all of the decisions were approved by the government. Until 1930, none of the Turkish Cypriot members of the Council managed to rise to the position of a community leader. Contrastingly, the Archbishop, as head of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, and various members of the Greek Cypriot elite competed for the role of the unofficial leader of the Greek Cypriot community. What, then, were the reasons for the lack of leadership among the Turkish Cypriots? According to Keyder, already from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, a state bureaucracy came into being that expanded significantly with the foundation of new government departments.<sup>244</sup> In Cyprus, this state bureaucracy was staffed primarily by Turkish Cypriots. With the arrival of the British, they were incorporated into the colonial government. Traditionally, it was the Ottoman army that gave access to public offices, but it was now the British who were in charge of the military. The bureaucratic middle class that had emerged in Cyprus, too, failed to affect local politics.<sup>245</sup>

As far as the religious elite is concerned, unlike the Orthodox Church, which had played a pivotal role in Greek Cypriot social and political affairs, the nature of the respective

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<sup>244</sup>Çağlar Keyder, *Türkiye’de Devlet ve Sınıflar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013), p. 67.

<sup>245</sup>Ibid, p. 239.

Islamic institutions, namely the Mufti, the *Kadı* and the delegate of the *Evkâf* was strictly religious. In other words, the Islamic institutions could not interfere in politics and their heads could not undertake political roles. Finally, the fact that the Turkish Cypriots were the leading element during Ottoman times secured the community's access to government jobs but limited its interest in commerce. Consequently, the Turkish Cypriots lacked a wealthy entrepreneurial elite that could engage in politics without any dependency on the government. In fact, employment in the colonial administration, according to Rappas, was "an enviable position in a society of indebted smallholding peasant proprietors as it opened prospects of financial autonomy".<sup>246</sup> In comparison to the Greek Cypriots, the Turkish Cypriots had much better relations with the colonial government for another reason: the fear of *Enosis*. The continuation of British rule was thus in the interests of the community.

With the end of Ottoman rule, Cyprus practically ceased being part of the Empire. In the Young Turk era, Cyprus did host various members of the Young Turk movement, but most of them did not remain in Cyprus after the Young Turk revolution in order to take up political roles. The outbreak of the First World War, and the restrictions that were imposed on the Turkish Cypriots because of the Empire's involvement in the war against Britain, hindered the emergence of a Turkish Cypriot leadership. The gradual centralization of the Turkish Cypriot religious institutions extended the dependence of the community on the government. The British, on the other hand, favoured the centralization of Muslim institutions and their administration by Turkish Cypriot notables who were, in essence, public servants. The most important of these posts was that of the *Evkâf* delegate who was charged with the administration of the community's religious endowments. These included real estate, property that constituted the community's wealth and the source of funding for schools and welfare institutions. In short, those who controlled the *Evkâf* also controlled the community. The *Evkâf* was administered by a Turkish Cypriot and a British delegate, appointed by the government. This essentially meant that the government was in control of the Turkish Cypriot

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<sup>246</sup>Alexis Rappas, "The Uncharted World of Cypriot Colonial Servants and the Ideological Foundations of British Rule, in *Cyprus Review* 23:2 Fall 2011, p. 63.

community. In the second half of the 1920s, the colonial government subjugated the Sheri Courts and the office of the Mufti to the *Evkâf* office. Münir Bey was the personality the government chose for the position of the administrative leader of the Turkish Cypriots. In the second half of the 1920s, Mısırlızade Necati Özkan attempted to challenge Münir Bey's domination and demand that the government secured the community's independence. Mehmet Münir Bey and Necati Özkan were the two main protagonists in the struggle for power between the old guard and the new. The leading role of the traditional Turkish Cypriot political elite was threatened by the emergence of Necati Özkan. The political bloc he led was named *Halkçılar* (populists) and they hoped to challenge the policies of the government towards the Turkish Cypriot community. Meanwhile, their opponents, the *Evkâfçılar* – named after their decision to comply with the Colonial Government's policy to centralise the administration of the *Evkâf* – chose to cooperate closely with the Government and abstained from criticizing the latter's policies on any matters that affected the community. This chapter aims to examine the leaders of the two political parties, Necati Özkan and Mehmet Münir, in order to demonstrate their roles as leading figures in the conflict that would gradually shape the identity of the Turkish Cypriot community.

### **Mehmet Münir Bey: The Traditional Leader of a Changing Community**

Mehmet Münir Bey was not only the head of the *Evkâfçılar*. He was the also longest serving Delegate of the *Evkâf* (1928-1947), a member of the Legislative Council from 1925 to 1930 and the holder of various other positions in Turkish Cypriot institutions. Yet Turkish Cypriot historiography has shown little interest in Münir Bey.

Born in 1890 in Nicosia, he was the nephew of Hacı Hafız Ziyai Efendi, the Mufti of Cyprus until 1927, whose daughter he later married. He graduated from the English School of

Nicosia and then studied law in London. He worked at the Treasury Department of the Colonial Government and served as temporary Judge of the District Court of Kyreneia.<sup>247</sup> His appointment as Delegate of the *Evkâf* in 1925 was definitely the most influential for his career. In a letter signed by Ahmet Said, lawyer and adversary of Mehmet Münir, to Lord Passfield, Secretary of State for the Colonies, we learn that Mehmet Münir occupied the following offices: Member of the Executive Council, ex-officio member of the Central Board of Education, President of the Town Committee for Secondary Education, ex-officio member of the Central Administrative Council (*Meclis-i İdare*), member of the Museum Committee, member of the Public Loans Commissioners, member of the Board of Irrigation, member of the Cyprus Social Hygiene Council, member of the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association and head of the Muslim Religious Tribunal (*Mahkeme-i Şeri*).<sup>248</sup> In 1931, he was named Officer of the British Empire and in 1947 he was given the title of Sir.<sup>249</sup>

Such an over-concentration of power was an indication that the Colonial Government had bestowed a great amount of trust in Münir Bey. Even after the first wave of complaints about Münir and his excessive powers, the Colonial Government chose not to limit his powers nor to attempt to build bridges with the Kemalist bloc. Münir's position in the community easily won him a seat in the Legislative Council in the 1925 elections. According to Gazioğlu, "no other Turk before or after him until the end of colonial rule undertook such extensive power and responsibilities, won the trust of the English administration and served the colonial administration with such loyalty".<sup>250</sup>

In order to understand Mehmet Münir's position and role in the Turkish Cypriot community, it's necessary to examine the nature of the Turkish Cypriot community, its economic institutions and its main sources of wealth. Following the Ottoman system of Religious Endowments, Cyprus' agricultural lands were administered to a great extent by

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<sup>247</sup> Aristeides L. Koudounaris, *Biografikon Lexikon Kyprion: 1800-1920*, (Nicosia, 2005), p. 288.

<sup>248</sup> CO 67/235/13, 18, Said to Lord Passfield, 25/6/1930.

<sup>249</sup> Koudounaris, p.288.

<sup>250</sup> Ahmet Gazioğlu, *İngiliz Yönetiminde Kıbrıs II: Enosis Çemberinde Türkler* (İstanbul: CYREP, 1996), p. 194.

these Endowments (*Evkâf*). The Muslim Religious Endowments can be divided into three main categories, in accordance with their nature and administrative method: the regular ones (*mazbut*), which were directly administered by the *Evkâf* Administration; and the dependent ones (*mülhak*), which each belonged to a particular family and could be transferred from one family member to another. The intervention of an administrator from the *Evkâf* Administration was not very common. Finally, there were exceptional ones (*müstesna*), which were administered by a trustee. When the Britain undertook the administration of the island in 1878, a British bureaucrat was appointed to the *Evkâf* together with the Delegate of the *Evkâf*, an Ottoman subject who was appointed by Istanbul. In 1914, Cyprus was officially annexed to Britain. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the annexation of the island to Britain in 1914 meant that the position of the Delegate of the *Evkâf* became a state institution. The appointment of Mehmet Münir Bey as Delegate of the *Evkâf* and the government's decision to strengthen its control over Muslim Religious Endowments further intensified the dependency of the community on the colonial government. The Delegate of the *Evkâf* could thus use his position in order to build and support a clientelistic network that could secure him the necessary votes in the elections of the Legislative Council.<sup>251</sup>

In a similar way, through the control of the *Evkâf* property all around the island, Mehmet Münir managed to extend his patronage to farmers and small craftsmen alike. This network was even extended to the wealthy notables, since Mehmet Münir could also somewhat control the public administration, namely the appointment of trustees or other public servants. Through his control of *Evkâf* property and commodities, the elite was also dependent on Mehmet Münir.<sup>252</sup>

Mehmet Münir rose to power in a transitional time for the Turkish Cypriot community, at a time when the community was moving from tradition to modernity. He cannot be described as a politician. He was rather a notable, who owed his power not the popular vote but to the government who had appointed him to the position of the Delegate of

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<sup>251</sup>Egemen, p.100.

<sup>252</sup>Ibid., pp.105-106.

the *Evkâf*. There are no indications that he launched an electoral campaign for the 1925 or the 1930 elections. As we have seen, the clientelist network he created with the help of the *Evkâf* was enough to secure him a seat in the Council. He did not even feel the need to publish articles in the pro-government press. Mehmet Münir acted more like an Ottoman vizier. He did not feel the need to address the community, because his powers emanated from the colonial government. Because of the lack of sources on Münir Bey, we can only approach his personality through his correspondence with the colonial government and the comments of British officials. In 1930, the issue of Münir Bey's multiple positions in political and communal institutions was raised by lawyer Ahmet Said.<sup>253</sup> He claimed that his offices were political and, as Delegate of the *Evkâf*, he should "stand above all politics, confining himself to the discharge of his official duties alone, carrying them out with justice and impartiality". The issue was discussed in the Colonial Office in London and one official, Arthur Dawe, justified Münir Bey's multiple positions in the following way:

With respect to the general question of Munir's multiple appointments, there is, I think some force in the criticism that one man ought not to be allowed to combine so many functions. The practical difficulty is, however, that the Cypriot Turks are not a very bright lot, and when a Turk has to be appointed to a Council or Committee the choice naturally falls upon Munir as he is the only one among them who carries the necessary guns. The occasions for making such appointments are numerous in Cyprus as Cypriot representation is always on a communal basis. The field for Greek committee men is extensive; but for the Turks it is practically confined to Münir.<sup>254</sup>

The colonial government undoubtedly believed in Münir Bey's skills but, more than that, in his loyalty. With the help of Münir Bey, the good relations between the Turkish Cypriot community and the Colonial Government were preserved until the late 1920s, though it was also due to an increasingly worrisome factor for the Turkish Cypriots – Greek Cypriot intransigence in the demand for *Enosis*. In light of this danger, the Turkish Cypriots' obvious choice was to ally with the Colonial Government. The price for this loyalty was a gradually

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<sup>253</sup>CO 67/235/13, 18-22, Said to Lord Passfield, 25/6/1930.

<sup>254</sup>CO 67/235/13, 7-8, Note by Dawe, 26/7/1930.

tighter control over Turkish Cypriot institutions that, combined with the dire economic conditions of the late 1920s, led to Mehmet Münir's defeat in the 1930 elections for the Legislative Council. The balance of power towards the end of the 1920s had changed. Kemalist ideas had gradually become popular among the Turkish Cypriots and the association of Mehmet Münir with the Government, as well as his role in the centralization of the *Evkâf*, was a source of grievance.

Although he was the most powerful Turkish Cypriot personality, Mehmet Münir apparently had limited contacts with Turkey and the Kemalist government. For this reason, we cannot be sure of his opinion on Republican Turkey. It is worth mentioning here that although Münir kept an undoubtedly pro-British stance, he was at times accused by anti-Turkey persons, such as Said Molla, of acting in favour of Turkey.<sup>255</sup> There were, of course, many Turkish Cypriots who opposed the Kemalist reforms for religious reasons but for Münir Bey, I believe, the reason was more practical. Münir Bey's power lay in the combination of politics and religion. He knew that the secularist reforms were a threat to his powers and therefore he tried to limit the influence of the Kemalist ideas in Cyprus. This explains, for example, his refusal to grant permission to fly the Turkish flag on the minaret of the Mosque of Larnaca on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 1930, the anniversary of the Turkish Republic. The explanation given by the Delegates of the *Evkâf* was that "the Mosques are religious buildings [and] could not participate in political demonstrations".<sup>256</sup> Mehmet Münir gradually distanced himself from the nationalist Turkish Cypriots and refused to acknowledge the rising popularity of Kemalist ideology among the younger generation. He seems to have influenced the colonial government as well, because neither Governor Storrs nor other government officials attempted to approach the Kemalist forces and instead remained loyal to Mehmet Münir.

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<sup>255</sup>Nevzat, *Nationalism*, p. 285.

<sup>256</sup>SA1 959/1925, 7, Delegates of Evkaf to the Colonial Secretary, 1/11/1930.

The defeat in the Legislative Council elections did not affect his status as head of the community. He was not removed from most of the offices he held until 1948. Nevertheless, Mehmet Münir was considered, by most Turkish Cypriots, not a leader but a servant of the Colonial Government. For this reason, Turkish Cypriot historiography has treated Mehmet Münir as alien to Turkish Cypriot interests.

### **Defying the old guard: Mısırlızade Necati Özkan, leader of the Turkish Cypriot Kemalists**

The 1920s witnessed the emergence of a new political elite among the Turkish Cypriots. The most prominent member of a group of young intellectuals and professionals who questioned the Turkish Cypriot community's close association with the British government of Cyprus was Mısırlızade Necati Özkan. He was born to a family of merchants in 1899 as Mehmet Hulusi. The surname Özkan (true-blooded) would be given to him later, by Kemal Atatürk during a visit to Ankara.<sup>257</sup> His great grandfather, Halil Ağa, had worked in Egypt at the Suez canal, which earned him the name Mısırlızade (the Egyptian's son). After returning from Egypt, he worked as a merchant and importer of raw materials. His grandfather, Hacı Osman Ağa, was a shoe-maker while his father, Ahmet Mısırlızade, worked at the Land Registry office in Nicosia, but soon resigned and took over the family shop. Later on, he built a career in the construction sector. In 1924, when Necati Özkan was twenty five years old, his father unsuccessfully attempted to place his candidacy for the elections of the Legislative Council, which would take place the following year against the then Delegate of the *Evkâf*, Musa İrfan Bey. Another family member, Necati Özkan's father's son-in-law Bahaeddin Bey, was also a candidate against Mehmet Münir Bey.<sup>258</sup> Due to his family's political views and their

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<sup>257</sup>Ergin M. Birinci, *M. Necati Özkan (1899-1970) I. Cilt*, (Istanbul: Necati Özkan Vakfı Yayınları, 2001), pp. 224-5. Necati proudly commented that he was the first and only Turkish Cypriot politician to meet with Kemal Atatürk.

<sup>258</sup>SA1:679/1925



involvement in politics against the *Evkâfçılar*, Necati Özkan was introduced to politics already from a young age.

According to his memoirs, Necati Özkan was arrested together with some of his fellow students at the age of 15, during the school year of 1914-1915, at the outbreak of the First World War, for singing the Ottoman imperial anthem. After graduating from the Turkish Lycée in 1918, he started preparing for the Istanbul University Law School exams. The British colonial government, though, imposed obstacles to the movement of Turkish Cypriots to the Ottoman Empire, due to the latter's involvement with the Central Powers in the First World War. As a result, Necati Özkan gave up his plans to study law and instead started a teaching career at the Turkish Lycée of Nicosia. He taught Turkish, Geography and History for three years and some future Turkish Cypriot leaders were among his students, such as Dr Fazıl Küçük, who was vice-president to Archbishop Makarios after Cyprus gained its independence in 1960, and Mehmet Zekâ, who was a member of the Legislative Council and a judge.

Necati Özkan's political career begins with the leadership of the National Front party (Millî Cephe Partisi). Although the Legislative Council, the island's only representative body, did not provide for the elections of political parties rather than individual candidates from both communities, the National Front can be considered as the first attempt among the Turkish Cypriot pro-Kemalist intellectuals to stand against the Delegate of the *Evkâf* and "de facto" Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Münir. Necati Özkan was elected member of the Municipal Council of Nicosia in 1926.<sup>259</sup> As his popularity rose, he gathered around him a group of professionals, lawyers and merchants who shared the Kemalist ideals.

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<sup>259</sup>Birinci, *M. Necati Özkan*, p. 116; nevertheless according to other sources Necati Özkan may have been elected to that post in 1929; see Altay Nevzat, *Nationalism among the Turks of Cyprus: The first Wave*, unpublished doctoral Thesis, (Oulu, University of Oulu, 2005p. 360; According to his own words Necati Özkan was elected member of the Municipal Council in 1926.

This success paved the way for the next electoral victory, this time at the elections for the Legislative Council. The 1930 elections were the culmination of the battle of the *halkçı* party against the *Evkâfçı*, the party led by Münir Bey. The decision to run as a candidate in the electoral district of Nicosia-Keryneia against Münir Bey, who was defending his seat in the Council, was to be expected given Necati Özkan's background, but most importantly the increase of the Kemalist bloc's influence in the Turkish Cypriot community. Having already gained experience from his election in the Nicosia Municipal Council, and with the support of the family network, Necati Özkan could also count on the support of the biggest-selling Turkish Cypriot newspaper, *Söz*. He announced his candidacy in the following words:

I have taken the decision and I will put up my candidacy for the Legislative Council. If you want to serve the fatherland and the nation elect me. Whenever you want, whatever your problem is, come and see me. Whereas, if you go to Mister Münir, who sits behind closed doors, he shall not accept you. Because this person who is not only an Evkâf Delegate but also a member of the Lyceum Committee and a member of the Legislative Council, is actually serving the interests of the English as well as his own. At this point Turkish Cypriots are in need of representatives who will support the rights of the Turks. That's why I'm a candidate for the Legislative Council. I shall stand wherever I see the nation's benefit.<sup>260</sup>

The elections that took place on October 15, 1930 gave Necati Özkan the opportunity to reaffirm his leading position among the nationalist bloc. The elections took place at a point when Kemalist ideas had an increasing appeal to the younger generation of Turkish Cypriots. What fueled Necati Özkan's electoral victory, however, was the frustration caused by the increasing control of the Turkish Cypriot institutions by Mehmet Münir, whose pro- English stance could not serve Turkish Cypriot interests any longer. The centralization of the *Evkâf* and the other Muslim institutions was presented as necessary in order to fight corruption and secure their prudent administration in favour of the community. Instead, the Turkish Cypriots felt that they had been cut off from their institutions. More importantly, however, the Turkish Cypriot population, which consisted primarily of farmers and craft workers, suffered not only

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<sup>260</sup>Ibid, p. 119

from the dire economic conditions due to the Great Depression and the drought that affected Cyprus in the late 1920s. Mehmet Münir's control of the Turkish Cypriot religious institutions helped him create a successful corporatist network, through which he could control the populace and maintain a group of voters numerous enough to secure his election to the Legislative Council in 1925.<sup>261</sup> The dire economic conditions towards the end of the 1920s led to Turkish Cypriot farmers and craft workers' dependence on either Mehmet Münir or Greek Cypriot usurers. The economy helped Necati Özkan overturn Mehmet Münir's influence and win the election.

Necati Özkan won the Nicosia-Kyrenia Legislative Council seat with 1,993 votes against 1,553 for Mehmet Münir. In a speech that he made in front of the *Kardeş Ocağı*<sup>262</sup> after his victory, he said the following:

Friends, it's not my victory, it's the nation's victory; it's yours, friends. You worked, you tried and you won. I congratulate you. I undertook this task immediately in order to serve my nation. Nevertheless, I'm not only a representative of the people who voted for me, I'm also a representative of those who voted against me and my opponent's, Mr. Münir's. They should not hesitate. We are inseparable. Let them come, we should unite under the same principles. Let's continue the national struggle all together. Everyone should direct their appeals to me. It's my duty to fulfill them. I will do everything for the sake of my nation and my fatherland.<sup>263</sup>

It's obvious though from this speech that Mısırlı Necati's aim was for Mehmet Münir's powers to become the question. His appeal for unity was directed at his political opponents, who had seen their power and influence decline.

Soon after his election, Mısırlı Necati used his capacity as member of the Legislative Council to overturn the Colonial Government's policies with regard to all issues affecting the Turkish Cypriot population: the government control over the Religious Endowments (*Evkâf*),

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<sup>261</sup>Salih Egemen, *Kıbrıslı Türkler Arasında Siyasal Liderlik*, (Lefkoşa, 2006), p. 105

<sup>262</sup>*Kardeş Ocağı* or "Hearth of Brethren" is the descendant of the *Hürriyet ve Terakki*, or "Liberty and Progress" club, a pro-Young Turk club. For more information see Nevzat, *Nationalism*, p. 177-185.

<sup>263</sup>Birinci, p. 141

the Religious Courts (*Mahkeme-i Şeri*), the abolition of the post of the *Müftü* and government control over Turkish schools. Due to Münir Bey's role as Delegate of the *Evkâf* and member of the School Committee, and also the reluctance of the Colonial Government to grant any autonomy to the Turkish Cypriot institutions, Necati's endeavors were not very successful. During the short period of time between his election in October 1930 and the abolition of the Legislative Council in November 1931, after the Greek Cypriot anti-Government riots, Necati Özkan engaged in various debates with Government officials, not only in Council sessions but also in the meetings of the School committees.

Strengthened by his electoral victory, Necati Özkan proceeded to his next political endeavor. On May 1, 1931, he called, at his own house in Nicosia, a National Congress with the participation of representatives from all over Cyprus. *Söz* newspaper published the call for participation in the congress on 20 April, 1931. The congress discussed the main issues affecting the community and elected a Mufti. The congress and its results were not taken into consideration by the government and the elected Mufti was not recognized.

To the esteemed Turkish Cypriot people.  
Dear fellow citizens;

There is no need to deny that we're living very fragile and extraordinary times. Today there are a lot of urgent issues that are at stake and that severely concern our community. The time has come long ago to settle these issues in respect to the desires and the needs of the people and to inform the government of our wishes. In this matter justice means to comply with the performance of our national interests. Our poor people will be affected by the great damage that will occur as a consequence. For this reason it's our national duty to search for ways that will procure a line of action taking care of our national issues and needs in accordance to the rules of our religion and to protect our rights arising from our everyday businesses. I strongly believe that no one should flee from the patriotic cause. I'm sure that our esteemed people shall demonstrate once again the vigilance they have always shown in regard to the national cause. For this reason it is apparent that the people shall demonstrate the highest degree of sensitivity in issues that affect their existence.

The representatives who shall be elected for every village and neighborhood shall meet in my house on the fourth Friday of the *Kurban Bayramı* at ten o'clock; I ask that our esteemed people take their participation in the congress seriously and I expect that they will undergo any sacrifice and demonstrate patriotism and nationalism [...]

The National Congress shall be discussed in detail in chapter 6. Here, I only refer to the decisions taken by the congress. The central committee of the congress consisted of prominent Kemalists and Mısırlızade Necati's allies. The Congress reaffirmed the Kemalist bloc's stance on the issues affecting the community and elected Ahmet Sait Efendi, a lawyer, to the position of the Mufti. As expected, the Colonial Government did not grant the National Congress any legitimacy and did not recognize the elected Mufti.

Mısırlızade Necati's election and his political activities were a cause of grievance for the colonial administration. The biggest threat to the stability of the colonial government was the disruption of the balance of power in the Legislative Council. Until 1931, the Colonial Government was able to block the frequent appeals of the Greek Cypriot members by using the votes of the Turkish Cypriot members. When Mısırlızade Necati voted with his Greek Cypriot colleagues in order to turn down a customs bill, the Governor of Cyprus, Sir Ronald Storrs, had to intervene and impose the bill by an Order-in-Council. For his temporary alliance with the Greek Cypriots, Necati Özkan was portrayed as "the little Turk" or the "thirteenth Greek". Governor Storrs could not hide his irritation regarding Necati Özkan, calling him "a man of straw", who in effect possessed "the casting vote of the Legislative Council".<sup>264</sup>

The October riots that led to the abolition of the Legislative council put an end to Mısırlızade Necati's political career.<sup>265</sup> The repressive measures imposed by the Colonial Government after October 1931 did not allow much space for political activity. Like their Greek Cypriot counterparts, Turkish Cypriot intellectuals however continued with the diffusion of Turkish nationalism and the implementation of the Kemalist reforms.

Necati Özkan belonged to a generation of Turkish Cypriots that had received schooling during the Young Turk era and the First World War. He witnessed the frustration caused by the disintegration of the Empire and was introduced to the ideas of Turkish

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<sup>264</sup>G.S.Georghallides, *Cyprus and the Governorship of Sir Roland Storrs: The Causes of the 1931 Crisis*, (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Center, 1985), p. 483.

<sup>265</sup>For the riots see chapter 7.

nationalism at a time when it had become clear that this was the only way to secure a homeland for Turkish communities. He embraced Turkish nationalism as it was advocated by the Kemalist regime and demanded that the Kemalist Reforms be implemented in Cyprus. His approach to the issue of the fez is indicative of his decisiveness to impose the reforms when there was no alternative. For example, during the annual congress of the Turkish Teachers Association on July 1, 1931, Necati took the floor, after a teacher named Raşit Bey had spoken out against the use of the fez and “with his pocket knife cut his fez into shreds”.<sup>266</sup>

The loyalty to the Colonial Government that had safeguarded Turkish Cypriot interests seemed problematic, especially when seen in light of Turkish nationalism. For Turkish nationalists, the enlightenment of their compatriots was regarded as a task for the nation. Therefore, Mısırlızade Necati considered the *Evkâfçılar* to be enemies of their own community. Hence, he dedicated all his efforts to putting an end to their rule over the community. By doing that, Necati Özkan and his supporters sought the opportunity to rule the Turkish Cypriots according to Kemalist principles, and also take control of the community’s wealth. In their attempt to consolidate their power, the nationalists used the Muslim institutions in a way that was contradictory to the Kemalist secular reforms. The abolition of the office of the Mufti by the government was in accordance with Kemalist principles. Nevertheless, the nationalists demanded that the Mufti be elected by the people. The office of the Mufti was thus given a political dimension too, apart from his religious one, in order to serve as a spiritual and political leader. It should not be a surprise that the colonial government did not recognize the Mufti that was elected by the National Congress.

After the abolition of the Legislative Council, Mısırlızade Necati remained politically active through the publication of regular articles in *Söz* and the dispatch of petitions and memoranda to the government. We also know that he was frequently in contact with the

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<sup>266</sup>Nesim, *Batmayan*, p. 21; the English translation is from Hüseyin Mehmet Ateşin, “The Process of Secularization of the Turkish Community (1925-1975), in Hubert Faustmann & Nicos Peristianis (eds.), *Britain in Cyprus: Colonialism and Post-Colonialism 1878 – 2006*, (Mannheim und Möhnesee: Bibliopolis, 2006), p. 341.

Turkish government in Ankara.<sup>267</sup> He also engaged in business and commerce. His devotion to Kemalist ideals can be traced in his business career too. He named his Cigarette Factory *Altı Ok* (Six Arrows) in a tribute to Kemal Atatürk's Republican People Party's emblem, which referred to the six main principles of Kemalist ideology.<sup>268</sup>

## Conclusions

This chapter has presented the two leading personalities that struggled for power among the Turkish Cypriots, Münir Bey and Mısırlızade Necati. Münir Bey was appointed Delegate of the *Evkâf* and, by virtue of this office, occupied almost all important posts in communal institutions. In this way, he became the leader of the community even though, as Delegate of the *Evkâf*, he was only a public servant. He owed his power to the colonial government and to the clientelist network that he managed to build through control of the community's finances. Mehmet Münir and his supporters were called *evkâfçılar* due to their support of the government's policy of controlling the *Evkâf*. They used the Greek Cypriot movement for *Enosis* as an excuse to display unconditional loyalty to the colonial government. Mehmet Münir's opposition to Kemalist ideas cannot be attributed solely to ideological reasons. I argue that the *evkâfçılar* felt threatened by the popularity of Kemalist ideas because they challenged the very foundations of their authority, namely the emphasis on the religious identity of the Turkish Cypriots and their loyalty to the colonial government. Turkish nationalism was seen as secularist and anti-colonial force and, despite their attempts, it gradually prevailed in Cyprus too.

On the other hand, Necati Özkan was a self-made entrepreneur, who challenged the supremacy of the *evkâfçılar* by running as a candidate against Mehmet Münir in the 1930 elections for the Legislative Council and winning the seat in the Nicosia -Kyreneia electoral district. Necati expressed the opinion that loyalty to the colonial government was harmful for

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<sup>267</sup>Birinci, 223-5

<sup>268</sup>Ibid., p.58.

the community, since the latter had curtailed the independence of the Turkish Cypriot religious and communal institutions. He accused Mehmet Münir of neglecting the community's interests and undermining its future. Furthermore, Mısırlızade Necati clashed with the government over the issue of the Lycée administration. The 1931 disturbances that caused the abolition of the Legislative Council ended Necati's political career and denied the nationalists the opportunity to oppose the government's decisions, since all powers were now gathered in the hands of the governor. Nevertheless, Necati Özkan continued publishing articles in *Söz* and criticizing the government. However, autocratic rule was not lifted until the end of British rule. Mısırlızade Necati later went into commerce. Although this generation of Turkish Cypriot nationalists was denied public office, their efforts were not futile. By the end of the 1930s, the Turkish Cypriots had embraced Turkish nationalism and the community had been modernized in line with the Kemalist reforms. Therefore, I argue, the debate between the *Evkâfçılar* and the nationalists should not be seen exclusively as a debate between Islamists and Kemalists. This division of the Turkish Cypriot elite should also be considered as a quest for power and influence.

The next generation of Turkish Cypriot statesmen adopted a more radical attitude towards both the Greek Cypriots and the colonial government. This is evident not as much in Dr Fazıl Küçük, who served as vice president in the first Cypriot government after independence, but in Rauf Denktaş, who was one of the founders of TMT, the Turkish Cypriot Resistance Organization that fought against *Enosis* in the 1950s.



## CHAPTER 5 – TURKISH CYPRIOT EDUCATION – THE FIGHT FOR THE LYCÉE

Throughout British rule, the issue of education was often at the centre of public discourse. At that time, the elites of both communities were fighting for the fulfillment of their respective national goals, each of which contradicted the other. The Greek Cypriot majority was fighting for *Enosis* with Greece, while the Turkish Cypriot minority was trying to secure its position on the island having lost the support of the Ottoman presence. Hence, education was crucial for both communities, in order to prepare future generations for their future. While Greek Cypriot education was in a more favourable position due to the support of the Greek Kingdom, which provided teachers and material, the Turkish Cypriot schools were bound to the Ottoman educational system and thus all its deficiencies –hesitation to introduce modern disciplines and difficulties in the funding of schools due to the deteriorating finances of the *Evkâf*. The end of the Empire and the establishment of the Republic were milestones for Turkish Cypriot education. The transformation of the community and the embracing of Turkish, Kemalist identity became the target of the educational system after 1918. The emergence of a state entity that replaced the Ottoman State secured the supply of teachers and material. More importantly, though, Turkish Cypriot education and more specifically the administration of Turkish Cypriot schools became the focal point of the dispute between the pro and the anti-British parties.

This chapter will attempt to analyze the nature of Turkish Cypriot education throughout British rule. In order to do that, I will look at the evolution of education in Kemalist Turkey. I will then present the procedure through which education became a controversial matter in Turkish Cypriot politics that culminated in the dispute about the administration of the Turkish Lycée in Nicosia.

## Turkish Cypriot Education in the Early Stages of British Rule

In 1878, the Turkish Cypriot community operated sixty-five primary schools (*İptidai*), one high school (*Rüşti*) and seven religious schools (*Medrese*).<sup>269</sup> In 1884, an Islamic Council of Education (İslam Maarif Encumeni) was established, with the participation of prestigious Turkish Cypriots. This would serve as the representative of the Ottoman Ministry of Education.<sup>270</sup> According to reports of the colonial government in 1879, there were a hundred and forty schools, 76 Christian and 64 Muslim.<sup>271</sup> In the last years of Ottoman rule and during early British rule, apart from the Quran, apparently no other subject was taught in Turkish Cypriot schools. Despite the fact that the colonial administration initially regarded the Greek and Turkish Cypriot educational systems as one entity, in 1881, the Secretary of State approved the creation of separate Educational Councils for the two communities.<sup>272</sup> The general secretary of the colonial government presided over both councils. The Education Law of 1885 confirmed the distinct educational councils. Moreover, the Law provided for Provincial Committees (Kaza Komisyonu) and Village School Committees (Köy Okul Komisyonu) that, in theory, gave the two communities authority over education issues on a local level. In practice, the functioning of the schools was determined by the available funds. The separate educational committees paved the way for the implementation of a nationalist educational agenda that was planned in Athens or Istanbul (and, after 1923, Ankara).

The Department of Turkish Education comprised the president, who was the general secretary of the government, the chief judge, the Mufti and the six elected members of the Provincial Committees. Amongst other things, the committees were responsible for deciding on the curriculum and appointing and dismissing teachers. In this way, the Greek Cypriot Educational Board approved the following lessons to be taught in Greek Cypriot schools:

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<sup>269</sup>Ulus Irkad, *Kıbrıs Türk Eğitiminde Tarihsel Gelişmeler*, Lefkoşa, 1997, p. 20.

<sup>270</sup>Burcu Özgüven, "From the Ottoman Province to the Colony: Late Ottoman Educational Buildings in Nicosia," *Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, 2004/1-2, pp. 42-3.

<sup>271</sup>Orr, *Cyprus*, p. 121.

<sup>272</sup>Irkad, *Kıbrıs*, p.21.

religion, Greek grammar, mathematics, physics, history, geography, music, hand-writing, arts and sports. The Turkish Cypriot educational board approved the following lessons to be taught in Turkish Cypriot schools: Quran, Turkish language, Ottoman and world geography, and basic arithmetic, as well as Arabic and Persian language in the highest classes.<sup>273</sup> From the curricula, it becomes clear that the two educational systems varied significantly. Most of the educational reports confirm the disparity in the quality of Turkish and Greek Cypriot education. More specifically, Turkish Cypriot schools were improperly funded, the teachers were poorly paid and, in many cases, especially during the First World War, the supply of books was problematic. In many cases, teachers had to depend on local communities for support, although that was not always the case. The memoirs of teacher Mehmet Zihni İmamzade offer some insight into the conditions of the Turkish Cypriot schools in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century:

[...]When the villagers appointed a teacher there were a lot of irregularities. The maximum wage was 12 Cypriot pounds. Some speculators would impose a commission and made teachers give 4 pounds back. The teacher in these days was both a teacher and an imam. Some profit would also be made from the mosque. [...] Among the graduate teachers of the *İdadi* (High School) I was the third. Since the provincial teachers' positions had been filled I applied for a post in the villages. Through the help of a good friend I applied at the village of Aydın (Ayyanni) The *muhtar* of the village was an enlightened man, also a graduate of the *İdadi* and supporter of the new ideas. With good bargaining I was appointed as a teacher with a wage of 18 Cypriot pounds per year. Nevertheless the villagers considered this excessive and there was a lot of gossiping. But the patriotic songs I taught the children and the shows they presented at the end of the year left the villagers happy. [...] I taught for five years in Ayyanni from 1915 to 1920. On the second year a village school was added and thanks to that in a village where Greek was spoken the new generations forgot Greek and became accustomed to speaking Turkish.<sup>274</sup>

There was a widespread belief among the Turkish Cypriot elite that the religious lessons that were taught in schools, together with the indifference of the community towards the education of its youth, were the reasons behind the backwardness of Turkish Cypriot

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<sup>273</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>274</sup>Ali, *Batmayan*, p. 167-170.

education. Watching the Greek Cypriots investing more in their schools, some Turkish Cypriots expressed their discontent at the colonial government for the deficiencies of their own schools.<sup>275</sup> They also expressed grievance with regard to the position of girls, the hesitance of some Turkish Cypriots to educate their daughters and the obligation on the girls to wear the headscarf.<sup>276</sup> This explains the willingness of the Turkish Cypriots to adopt the Kemalist reforms, especially the ones that were related to social progress, for example the language reform, the abolition of the fez and the introduction of surnames. Hasan Saffet Hocalar, a teacher at the Nicosia *Rüşti*, described the introduction of the hat reform in the following words:

[...] One day my dad called us and said: “Atatürk gave an order that every Moslem should wear a hat. Even though our family has always been a family of turbaned hodjas and they will advise you not to wear it don’t listen to them. Since it’s imposed by law you will are supposed to wear it. I then took off my fez and started wearing a hat.”<sup>277</sup>

For Turkish Cypriot female students, the Kemalist reforms were an opportunity to secure the right to education like their Greek Cypriot counterparts. The Turkish Cypriots were less eager to send their children to school and the proportion of female students was smaller than that among the Greek Cypriots. From the memoirs of Hıfısiye Ziya Hacıbulgur, daughter of the editor of *Birlik* newspaper, we learn that, as a student at Victoria Girls Technical School (Viktorya İslam İnas Sanat Mektebi) in 1917, she used to wear a headscarf and a veil (*çarşflı ve peçeli*). Through her father’s friendship with the Turkish Consul in Cyprus, but most importantly under the influence of her older sister Melahat, who came to Cyprus in 1927 after finishing her studies in Istanbul, she took off her headscarf.<sup>278</sup>

In rural areas, teachers had to face villagers’ reluctance to send their children to school. According to Sıddıka Ahmet, who served as a teacher in the village of Kokkina in the northwestern coast of the island in 1925, the parents of the only student in the school did not

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<sup>275</sup>Bryant, *Imagining*, p. 150-1.

<sup>276</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>277</sup>Ali, *Batmayan*, p.197.

<sup>278</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 203-4.

want her to teach subjects other than Turkish out of fear that their son would leave the village in search of a better life in one of the big cities. Moreover, in cases of mixed villages, students would often speak Greek Cypriot dialect instead of Turkish.<sup>279</sup>

It was under these adverse conditions that the Turkish Cypriot community embraced the Kemalist reforms such as the language reform. For the Turkish Republic, this meant a break from the *ancien régime*.<sup>280</sup> But for the Turkish Cypriots, this transformation was seen as a necessary step that would bring the community closer to republican Turkey. Due to the British presence for more than 40 years, both the Turkish and the Greek Cypriots had been acquainted with aspects of modernity. The relatively moderate nature of Turkish Cypriot Islam, as we have seen, facilitated the adoption of secularist reforms. But, for the Turkish Cypriots, the educational reform was seen as a prerequisite for communal progress, and such progress as a prerequisite for national existence. Hence, Atatürk acquired the status of the saviour (*kurtarıcı*) of the community that, together with the local enlighteners (*aydınlar*), would lead the community into the future.<sup>281</sup> This also explains the frequent comparison with the Greek Cypriots' education and the grievance that the Greek Cypriots demonstrated social and financial progress through their investment in education.

For their part, the British preferred to organize the educational system in Cyprus along religious rather than national lines. While this was the case until the 1920s, both communities retained a certain amount of autonomy in deciding the curriculum, the use of national symbols (flags, pictures of national heroes) and the celebration of national days. Until 1931, the colonial Government did not intervene in the expression of national sentiment in schools. Despite the fact that the names of the Turkish Cypriot schools would often bear the term "Muslim", even in the 1920s, the curriculum used was the one used in mainland Turkey, most of the teachers had been educated in Turkey and the British did not impose any

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<sup>279</sup>Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>280</sup>Benjamin Fortna, *Learning to Read in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 21-22.

<sup>281</sup>Bryant, *Imagining*, p. 152.

obstacles to the use of education to instill the nationalist principles of Republican Turkey in Turkish Cypriot youth. Greek Cypriot schools followed the same pattern.

The most prestigious Turkish Cypriot schools were found in Nicosia. They were established in the vicinity of Hagia Sophia Mosque in the Turkish district of the old city of Nicosia, where the *Büyük Medrese* (Religious Islamic School) used to be until 1936, when the building was destroyed by a fire.<sup>282</sup> Despite the eagerness the Turkish Cypriots displayed in implementing the secularist reforms, the *Medrese* was not shut down until 1940.<sup>283</sup> Although the colonial government facilitated the implementation of the reforms, they did not interfere in the operation of the *Medrese*. The Ruştiye School (Junior High School) was also established in the vicinity of the Hagia Sophia mosque in 1862.<sup>284</sup> In 1896, it became in İ'đadi (High School) and, in 1926, its name was changed into the Muslim School (İslam Erkek Lisesi) or Lycée, from the French, following the Kemalist reforms in education. It was built in neoclassical style, following the architectural style of İ'đadi schools in Anatolia.<sup>285</sup> It was the only Turkish Cypriot secondary education school until 1944-1945.<sup>286</sup>

Due to the need for female education, a Professional School for Moslem Girls (İslam İnas Sanayi Mektebi) was founded in 1901. It was funded by wealthy Turkish Cypriots and it also received a donation of fifty pounds sterling from the Colonial Government in honour of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. Thereafter, it was known as the Victoria School for Girls (Viktorya Kız Okulu).<sup>287</sup> The school was funded with financial contributions from wealthy Turkish Cypriots as well as the *Evkâf*. The colonial government also offered financial support. It provided lessons in handicrafts, the Quran, writing and English.<sup>288</sup> Graduates of the Victoria School as well as the Moslem School were appointed as teachers. Towards the end of the

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<sup>282</sup>Özgüven, *Education*, p. 39.

<sup>283</sup>Gazioğlu, *The Turks*, p.199.

<sup>284</sup>Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>285</sup>Özgüven, p. 45.

<sup>286</sup>Ali Suha, "Kıbrıs'ta Türk Maarifi," in *Milletlerarası Birinci Kıbrıs Tetkileri Kongresi*, (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1971), p. 225.

<sup>287</sup>Özgüven, pp. 48-49.

<sup>288</sup>Ibid, p. 49.

1920s, Turkish Cypriot graduates from Turkish universities were also appointed in Turkish Cypriot schools.

The colonial government attempted to regulate education with various laws. According to the provisions of the 1920 law, teachers were appointed and dismissed by the governor according to the suggestions of the Educational Committee. The 1929 law gave the governor responsibility in regard to the above-mentioned issues. Despite the fact that the 1929 law was a step closer to the centralization of educational policies, it still gave some autonomy to the communities, for instance in relation to the books that were imported from Turkey and Greece. The 1931 riots obliged the colonial government to enforce much stricter regulations that established, among other things, the government's control over textbooks, the government's appointment of the members of the Educational Committee, the government's total control over the taxes collected for educational purposes and the Educational Committee members' strictly consultative role.<sup>289</sup> These measures aimed at limiting the impact of nationalist ideas in Greek and Turkish Cypriot schools.

The educational policy of the colonial government, already from the early stages of British rule in Cyprus, to allow the establishment of separate educational boards for the two communities paved the way for the upbringing of the younger generations of Turkish and Greek Cypriots in accordance with the principles of Turkish and Greek nationalism. Despite the fact that British officials presided over the educational boards, both communities actually decided on the appointment of teachers, the curriculum, the celebration of national holidays, etc. In the memoirs of the governor, Sir Ronald Storrs, we read that, as far as the Greek Cypriot schools were concerned,

[...] there was no definite anti-British curriculum in the Schools but they were all actively Hellenizing. All Greek Elementary Schools used the "Analytical Programme" as published in Greece and adopted by the Cyprus Board of Education. No reading books were allowed in these schools except those that were approved by the "Critical Committee" in Athens. The *Gymnasium* of each town and the Teacher Training College

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<sup>289</sup>Suha, *Kıbrıs*, p. 226.

were recognized by the Greek Ministry of Education, and worked under Regulations issued there-from. Portraits of King Constantine and Queen Sophie, of Venizelos and other worthies, but of no English sovereign, adorned the walls of the class-rooms, together with elaborate maps of modern Greece; while the that of Cyprus, if to be found at all, was as a rule small, out of date, worn out, and frequently thrust behind the blackboard.”<sup>290</sup>

According to Storrs, even the Greek Cypriot scouts “were under the Greek constitution and made annual returns to the Greek Ministry of Education.”<sup>291</sup> While Storrs pointed out the expression of Greek nationalism in Greek Cypriot schools, since this was connected to the *Enosis* movement, which was a source of concern for the government, the Turkish Cypriot schools too followed a curriculum adopted by the Turkish Ministry of Education in Ankara and their walls were likewise adorned by portraits of Mustafa Kemal and İsmet İnönü.

Given Kemalist Turkey’s role in Turkish Cypriot education, it would be useful to examine the nature of Kemalist educational principles. They were implemented in Cyprus together with the secular reforms and inevitably shaped the Turkish Cypriot youth. According to İsmail Kaplan, Kemal Atatürk and his party, the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) played a decisive role in the creation of the Turkish nation-state and Kemalism became the official ideology of this state. National education thus bore the stamp of Kemalist ideology.<sup>292</sup> What, then, was the role of education according to Kemal Atatürk? The founder of modern Turkey believed that the aim of education was “to raise the young generations to become loyal to the Turkish nation and state and to prepare them to take up the fight against the enemies of the Turkish nation and state”.<sup>293</sup> The aim of the Turkish educational system was to equip the citizens of the new Turkish state with two characteristics: civilization

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<sup>290</sup>Storrs, *Orientations*, p. 547.

<sup>291</sup>Ibid., p. 548.

<sup>292</sup>İsmail Kaplan, *Türkiye’de Milli Eğitim İdeolojisi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), p. 133.

<sup>293</sup>Ibid., p.140.



(medenilik) and patriotism (yurtseverlik).<sup>294</sup> The “accepted citizen” (makbul vatandaş) should be civilised, that is, able to follow the achievements of Western civilization and a patriot, ready to protect the nation and safeguard the state and its principles. These of course included the secular reforms. In order to achieve this goal, the secular educational system incorporated the element of ethnicism that had become a component of Kemalist nationalism.<sup>295</sup> History textbooks portrayed the Turkish nation as “a superior race”. At the same time, the Ottoman past was neglected; the Ottoman state was presented as almost foreign.<sup>296</sup>

This was the nature of the Turkish educational system. To a great extent, with the help of Turkish teachers, educated in Turkish universities, it was followed in Turkish Cypriot schools too. Turkish Cypriot students thus were educated according to the principles of Kemalism and, by the end of the 1920s, a generation of Turkish Cypriots had fully adopted these principles. Unlike the Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriot youth abstained from acts of disobedience but, as we shall see, the nationalist party mobilized Turkish Cypriot students on the issue of the Lycée.

Cyprus, however, was not an exception in the use of education as a source of political agitation. In mandatory Palestine, too, despite the fact that Arab education had been placed under the control of the British, “nationalism thrived in the schools”.<sup>297</sup> For the Palestinians, education was regarded as a tool that would enable future generations to overthrow foreign domination. In that sense they resembled the Greek Cypriots, since for them, too, education was regarded as the path that would lead the Greek Cypriot youth towards the goal of *Enosis* with Greece. The grievance of the Palestinians due to British involvement in Education, namely government control over Arab schools, was shared by both Greek and Turkish Cypriots, who also demanded more autonomy in educational affairs. For the Turkish

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<sup>294</sup>Füsun Üstel, “*Makbul Vatandaş*”ın peşinde: II. Meşrutiyet’ten Bugüne Vatandaşlık Eğitimi (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları: 2011), pp. 174-5.

<sup>295</sup>Ahmet Yıldız, “*Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene*”: *Türk Ulusal Kimliğinin Etno-Seküler Sınırları (1919-1938)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), pp. 228-9.

<sup>296</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>297</sup>A.L. Tibawi, “Educational Policy and Arab Nationalism in Mandatory Palestine,” in *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 4, Issue 1, 1955, p. 17.

Cypriots, in particular, the appointment of a British headmaster at the Lycée became a matter of dispute between the conservatives, the Kemalists and the colonial government.

### **The battle for the Lycée**

As we saw in the previous chapters, the debate between the *Evkâfçılar* and the nationalists heated up towards the end of the 1920s. Mehmet Münir's tight control of practically all communal institutions, and the loyalty to the colonial government that – according to the views of the Kemalist-oriented opposition – limited the independence of the community, were the main factors that led to the 1930 debate. The administration and control of the Lycée was at the centre of the debate between Mehmet Münir and Necati Özkan.

Georghallides offers a detailed account of the origin of the debate. In 1928, Mehmet Münir, head of the Turkish Board of Education, selected R. N. Henry from Saint Columba's college in Dublin for the position of the headmaster of the Lycée, with the approval of the governing body of the school.<sup>298</sup> The new headmaster reorganized the school in accordance with the curriculum set out by Istanbul University, so that more graduates could proceed to higher education. A part of the school was organized as a college with classes in English that would prepare students for studies in Britain, government jobs and commerce. These changes were approved by the *Evkâf*, the government and the board of education who supported the school financially. This attempt came to a standstill after one year, when headmaster Henry became Assistant Director of Education. His successor, Major Lewis J. Grant, who took up

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<sup>298</sup>The governing body of the school consisted of the three Muslim members of the Legislative council and the three members they nominated, the British Delegate of the *Evkâf* and the Director of Education. The pro-government candidates had dominated the 1925 Legislative Council elections hence the governing body was controlled by the *Evkâfçılar*.

duty in 1930, was considered unsuitable for the post and did not speak a word of Turkish. That, however, was not the only problem facing the Lycée. After the 1930 elections, the school's governing board came under the control of the Kemalist opposition, which had elected two members in the Legislative Council. From that point onwards, the newly-elected Necati Özkan and Mehmet Zekâ used their majority in the committee to demand that Grant be removed from his position and that a Turkish headmaster be appointed.

The issue of the Lycée was used extensively by Necati Özkan during the campaign for the 1930 elections. Although there were more urgent issues in the agenda of the Kemalist party, such as the independence of the *Evkâf*, Necati Özkan chose the Lycée as a central point in his campaign against Mehmet Münir and the colonial government. Knowing that the colonial government would not agree to alter its *Evkâf* policy, he chose an easier target, that of Turkish Cypriot education and in particular the Lycée. The demand for the appointment of a Turkish headmaster at the Lycée appeared to be a more feasible target although, as we shall see, the colonial government was not willing to break its alliance with the *Evkâfçılar*.

According to a memorial sent to the Secretary of State, signed among others by Mehmet Münir, Necati Özkan owed his election to the “capital he made out of misinterpretations of policies relating to the Lycée initiated by Münir bey as chairman of its governing body”.<sup>299</sup>

The Lycée students rallied around Necati Özkan, participated in his election campaign, including by taking part in public meetings, and even wrote a poem praising him.<sup>300</sup> On the night of the election, governor Storrs reported that “Necati stirred up a riot in the Turkish Lycée in which one of the English masters was assaulted”.<sup>301</sup> Necati was accused by the government of intervening in the Lycée when, a few days after the elections, during a visit to the school, he entered the headmaster's office and took a notebook with the purpose of examining the headmaster's wrongdoings. According to Necati Özkan's memoirs, after the

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<sup>299</sup>Georghallides, *Cyprus*, p. 469.

<sup>300</sup>Birinci, *M. Necati*, p. 131.

<sup>301</sup>Georghallides, p. 469.

incident, the governor asked to see him in an apparent attempt to examine his intentions.<sup>302</sup>

The governor's reaction proves that the British failed to realize the influence of Turkish nationalism and the extent of the discontent with the government's decisions on the Turkish Cypriot institutions.

When the headmaster refused to hoist the Turkish flag on the occasion of Turkish Republic Day on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October, the students went on strike.<sup>303</sup> On the same day, the refusal of the *Evkâf* to illuminate the Nicosia minarets raised anti-government feelings.<sup>304</sup> By criticizing the government, Necati Özkan was actually attacking the *Evkâf* and Mehmet Münir. In an article published on 16 July 1931, under the title "What have they done? What did we do and what do we want to do?" (Onlar ne yaptılar? Biz ne yaptık ve yapmak istiyoruz) nine months after the elections, frequent *Söz* columnist Ahmet Raşit attacked the *Evkâf*, referring to the chronic issues of the Muftiship and the Religious Courts. On the Lycée, he wrote the following:

[...] They assigned the Religious Courts to the Service of the *Evkâf*. [...] Because if they [the Courts] are seen belonging to another institution other than the *Evkâf* this may give the impression that there are other institutions and other powers except the power of the *Evkâf* and this may pave the road for the expression of people's wishes contrary to the *Evkâf* mentality. They wanted to alienate the Lycée just for the support of these politics. Considering that there were Kemalists in the country they had to prevent this while there was time. Because those who graduate from this school could have been intoxicated with these ideas and cause problems to the *Evkâfçılar* and the government. However if an English headmaster is appointed to the school the aim of the school is turned away from Ankara and the danger of educating an obedient and depraved youth they way they want could not be prevented.<sup>305</sup>

The 1930 election results raised hopes among the Kemalists that the influence of the *Evkâfçılar* could be limited through the rising power of Necati Özkan. Nevertheless, nine months after his election, Necati Özkan had not managed to change the pro-government

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<sup>302</sup>Birinci, *M. Necati*, pp. 146-47.

<sup>303</sup>*Ibid.*, p.469.

<sup>304</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>305</sup>*Söz* PIO, 16/7/1931, p1.

policies of the *Evkâf* and, despite the majority in the board of the Turkish Lycée, the Kemalists had been unable to impose their will, that is, to appoint a Turkish headmaster. Interestingly, the author expresses his concern that the appointment of yet another English headmaster would alienate the students from Kemalist principles and would raise a youth obedient [to the government] and depraved (*mutî ve mütereddî*).

The Lycée governing body met on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1931 and, this time, the government and the *Evkâf* refused to pay the annual grant to the school unless the English headmaster was reinstated. Necati Özkan reacted by saying the following:

[...] we request our legal rights and this grant is legally ours. His Excellency the Governor is not giving this money to us because we request it, out of pity or generosity. We request this money that belong to our Community and come from the budget of the *Evkâf* property that remains from our ancestors. It is the *Evkâf* that our ancestors dedicated thinking of our benefit. Neither the *Evkâf* delegate nor the Governor can cut this grant. Our ancestors dedicated the *Evkâf* property. It wasn't the grandfathers of his Excellencies Storrs and Gallagher.<sup>306</sup> The Government's only right over this endowment consists of the right to supervise the financial part. The Government had undertaken by treaty towards the Islamic Community to protect the integrity of the *Evkâf*. How does the Government not interfere in the Church property of the other nation that lives in Cyprus like us and how doesn't the government examine how they spend their revenue the government and an interference is unnecessary and outside of the Governor's authority.<sup>307</sup>

This extract shows that at the heart of the Lycée issue lay the administration of the *Evkâf* and the issue of the community's independence, hence the comparison with the Greek Cypriots and the government's lack of interest in controlling the Orthodox Church and Greek Cypriot education.<sup>308</sup> Necati Özkan was not complaining so much about the quality of education offered by the Lycée, as about control over it. He was trying to get the school under the control of the Kemalist party. The appointment of a Turkish headmaster was crucial

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<sup>306</sup>Lieutenant E.A Gallagher was the Chief of Police.

<sup>307</sup>Söz PIO, 5/2/1931.

<sup>308</sup>The Greek Cypriot schools received funds from non-governmental sources in comparison to the Lycée and the Victoria Girls' School. As a result the government support to the Lycée exceeded that towards the Greek Cypriot Panypryan Gymnasium. See Georghallides, p. 479.

because it would secure the diffusion of the principles of Turkish nationalism. The majority in the governing board of the Lycée was the opposition's only success against the *Evkâfçılar* after the latter's victory in the Legislative Council elections. Sadly for the opposition, the school funding remained in the hands of the government and the *Evkâf*. The government, on the other hand, did not show any intention to satisfy the demands of the opposition. Towards that end, the government could use the opposition's arguments, too. On January 29, 1931, the Turkish members of the governing body of the school, Necati Özkan and Mehmet Zekâ, sent a memorial to the Secretary of State. They claimed that the budget was not enough to support college classes and they insisted that, instead, there should be more English classes together with Mathematics, Chemistry and Physics. While they repeated the claim that the current headmaster was inadequate, they admitted that "the non existence of a qualified person amongst our nation to administer this school is very much annoying the community".<sup>309</sup>

The lack of a qualified Turkish Cypriot to be appointed to the position of the headmaster of the Lycée was not the reason behind governor Storr's refusal to satisfy the demands of the signatories. That must be attributed to the government's unwillingness to break its alliance with the pro-British political elite. The pro-government *Hakikat* responded to the Kemalists with an article signed by Dr. Eyyup Necmettin, published on February 7, 1931 under the title "We're being dragged to Anarchy" (Anarşiye Sürükleniyoruz).

[...] The Turkish space on the island is for 2-3 years a boiling cauldron and around this cauldron there are some janissary aghas. They say that inside the cauldron boils a mixture of Turkishness and nationalism and that they try to present this to the pure Turkish people. All along they claim that there are those who are not Turkists and who betray Turkishness! We are not in the position to give explanations about the extent of the attachment of the Turks of Cyprus to the motherland up to twenty years before the occupation. [...] The Turks of this country have sacrificed themselves and have demonstrated proximity to the motherland and its prosperity – that hasn't been abundant – and its calamities more than the Turks of other countries. [...] How many years has it been since the primary schools follow the curriculum of the primary schools of the motherland? Is there anyone who can disaffirm our claim that the Latin

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<sup>309</sup>Söz PIO, 19/2/1931, p.2 The Memorial of the Governing Body of the Turkish Lycée to His Excellency the Governor of Cyprus.

letters were approved here and were included in the schools the earliest after Turkey? As far as the case of the hat is concerned, how was the initiative of the religious people who were at the governing body of the Lycée to stop the compliance with the measure confronted and what were the results of this confrontation? If all these are not an open demonstration of the ideals and the national will of those who lead the social and national destiny of the Turks of Cyprus in the previous years, then what are they?<sup>310</sup>

Eyüp Necmedin, the only candidate of the pro-government party who managed to get elected to the Legislative Council in 1930, attempted to answer the claims of the Kemalist party that cooperation with the colonial government equalled betrayal of national ideals. In his article, Necmedin referred to various expressions of national pride on behalf of the Turkish Cypriots in the years preceding the rise to power of the Kemalist party, in order to highlight the loyalty of the community to Republican Turkey. He went further by accusing the Kemalists of attempting to indoctrinate the Turkish Cypriots with a nationalist propaganda that was not necessary, since they had demonstrated time and again their attachment to the motherland. Indeed, *Hakikat* celebrated the Turkish Day of the Republic or Victory Day by publishing pictures of Mustafa Kemal on the front page. Yet the newspaper was still published in old Turkish even in 1931, three years after the language reform.

The Lycée debate did not come to an end with the Governor's refusal to accept the appointment of a Turkish headmaster. It continued throughout 1931 through memoranda and press articles. On April 23, the minority on the Lycée's governing body sent a petition to the Secretary of State in order to respond to the arguments of the majority. They argued that the school was organized according to the requirements of Istanbul University, that the College classes were necessary for the education of Turkish Cypriot youth and that conditions were not ripe for a Turkish headmaster. They even went as far as to request an amendment of the Moslem Secondary Education Law in order to "change the composition of the governing body so as to dissociate education from the fetters of political intrigue by which is at present

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<sup>310</sup>Hakikat, SATRNC, 7/2/1931, p.2.

bound”.<sup>311</sup> In other words, the pro-Government party wanted to see the Kemalist party’s only majority curtailed in an attempt to reverse the adverse election results.

Ahmet Raşit and Mehmet Remzi dealt with the Lycée and the issue of Turkish Cypriot education extensively in columns of *Söz*. In an article published on March 19, 1931, under the title “What should be the direction of our education?”, Ahmet Raşit repeated the claim that the Turkish Cypriots were under foreign rule and that the government was not going to be kind and loyal towards the community.<sup>312</sup> For this reason, the Turkish Cypriots needed a *national educational system* (millî bir maarif sistemi lâzımdır). He claimed that the Turkish Cypriots should search for inspiration and sources in the great Turkish soul (büyük Türk ruhunda arayacağız). According to Raşit, following the educational development of the motherland and using it as an example would save the Turkish Cypriots from darkness and ignorance (karanlık ve cehaletten kurtaracaktır). The appeal to the community to adopt the Turkish educational reforms in order to save itself from ignorance was not a novelty either in Turkish or in Turkish Cypriot discourse. The need for modernization had been constantly repeated since the Tanzimat era. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk himself used the term “ignorance” in relation to the Caliphate and the need to abolish it.<sup>313</sup> The Kemalist-oriented intellectuals used this rhetoric against the *Evkâfçılar*, accusing them of undermining the future of the community and condemning the Turkish Cypriots to backwardness. In other words, objection to the secular reforms was equivalent to betrayal of the community and the ideals of the Turkish nation.

In the same article, Ahmet Raşit repeated what was common ground among Turkish Cypriot intellectuals – that the community lagged behind in terms of education. (Biz maarifçe maalesef geri kalmış bir cemmatiz.) This argument was repeated, however, in order to point out the need for a new educational system. According to the author, this system should comply fully with the Turkish educational system. In that sense, Ahmet Raşit was not against

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<sup>311</sup>Georghallides, *Cyprus*, p. 480.

<sup>312</sup>*Söz* PIO, 19/3/1931, p. 1, Maarifimizin vehçesi ne olmalıdır?

<sup>313</sup>Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: Hurst&Company, 1998), p.460.



certain kind of schools. “If the motherland deemed it necessary to establish Lycées or Colleges so should the Turkish Cypriot. If the Turks in Anatolia decided to abolish the College system so should we.” In short, it did not matter what kind of an educational system the Turkish Cypriots would adopt as long as it was a national educational system.

After the end of the school year, July 9, 1931, *Söz* published an article under the title “Lycée Graduates”. The author (presumably Mehmet Remzi) addressed the financial issue facing the Department of Education, due to which the graduates would not be given teaching jobs. Using rather reconciliatory language in comparison to previous publications, the author requested the replacement of the member of the Department of Education, claiming that they were inadequate and could not serve the present educational system.<sup>314</sup>

Another incident that proves that the headmaster, Major Lewis Grant, had been alienated from his students and the nationalist Turkish Cypriots is described in an article published on July 16, 1931 in *Söz*. On the occasion of Turkish National Sovereignty Day (Milli Hakimiyet Bayramı), the students requested that the school remained closed. The headmaster turned down this request and announced that the absent students would be punished. The following day, the students came to school but did not enter the classrooms. When the deputy Headmaster saw one of the teachers, Mr. Ekrem Tahsin, among the students, he forced him to enter the classroom.<sup>315</sup> Like the governor and other British officials, the headmaster was unable to realize the importance of Turkish national sentiment among the Turkish Cypriots.

The debate on educational issues was not limited to secular education. The issue of the dire condition of the *Ayasofya Medrese* in Nicosia, the second oldest *Medrese* in Cyprus, worried *Söz*, which published an article on August 18, 1931, under the title “The Ayasofia Medrese is being demolished, let’s see what will come out of its foundations”. Despite the fact that all *Medreses* had been closed down by the Kemalist government in Turkey, the newspaper seemed alarmed by the condition of the building and did not request that all

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<sup>314</sup>*Söz* PIO, 9/7/1931, p. 1, Lise Mezunları.

<sup>315</sup>*Söz* PIO, 16/7/1931, p. 2., Maarif İşleri Çocuk Oyuncağı Oldu.

medreses in Cyprus be closed down. Instead, the author criticized the government and the *Evkâf* for not taking care of Turkish Cypriot monuments. It was not, though, the first time that the Turkish nationalists in Cyprus had supported Muslim institutions in contrast with the secular policies of the Turkish government.<sup>316</sup> Institutions such as the Muftiship or the *Medresses* were considered vital even by the nationalist-oriented Turkish Cypriots for the survival of the community. Although the Kemalist reforms provided for the institutionalization of religion so that it would come under state control, the nationalists in Cyprus resisted the institutionalization of their own institutions and their control by the Colonial Government.

*Hakikat* answered *Söz*'s questions with an article published on September 26, 1931, entitled "The Reformation of the Medreses". According to the author, the restoration of the *Medrese* was under way and the object was "to establish an İlmiye School (Religious School) where candidates for the religious posts of Imam, Hatib,<sup>317</sup> Muderris<sup>318</sup> and Preachers will be educated".<sup>319</sup> *Hakikat* used a rather exuberant tone in reporting the role of the *Evkâf* delegates, which shows the editor's approval of this project. For the record, the said *Medrese* was destroyed in 1936 and in its place the *Evkâf* founded a religious school.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>316</sup>Söz PIO, 18/8/1931, p.1, Ayasofya Medresesi yıkılıyor, bakalım temelinden ne çıkacak?.

<sup>317</sup>Imam is the prayer leader and *Hatib* (khatib in Arabic) the person who delivers the sermon during the Friday prayer.

<sup>318</sup>*Muderris* is the teacher of a religious school, or medrese.

<sup>319</sup>Hakikat SA1, 26/9/1931.

<sup>320</sup>Özgüven, *From the Ottoman*, p. 39.

## Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to examine the role of Turkish Cypriot education in the emergence of Turkish nationalism in the island. The Turkish Cypriots had realized that they lagged behind in terms of education in comparison to the Greek Cypriots and various attempts were made to raise the quality of schools and teachers. Nevertheless, the dire economic condition of the *Evkâf* and the absence of a wealthy entrepreneurial elite willing to fund the establishment and running of secondary schools delayed the process of modernization. The attempt of the government to control the only secondary education institution, the Lycée, caused the nationalist opposition to react and the issue of the Lycée became part of the debate over the independence of the Turkish Cypriot community. The limited independence of Turkish Cypriot education was curtailed by the government restrictions imposed after the Greek Cypriot revolt of 1931. For the nationalist opposition, the government aimed at alienating the Turkish Cypriots from Kemalist Turkey, while the pro-British *Evkâfçılar* failed to see any fault in the government's educational policies.

After 1931, the debate about the administration of the Lycée continued, since the government refused to satisfy the Kemalists' demand for a Turkish headmaster. In 1933, the Lycée was renamed Cyprus Muslim Lycée (Kıbrıs İslam Lisesi) and, in the same year, a Turkish headmaster, İsmail Hikmet bey, was finally appointed.<sup>321</sup> This did not appease the nationalist press, who accused him of applying European principles that were not suitable for the school.<sup>322</sup> It seems that the issue of the Lycée was still being used by nationalists for political purposes. Despite occasional obstacles that were presented by the colonial government, teachers from Turkey were appointed in Turkish Cypriot schools and they used Turkish textbooks. Although the colonial government imposed strict control on Turkish Cypriot education after 1931, it did not manage to suppress nationalist sentiment, because the

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<sup>321</sup>Nesim, *Batmayan*, p. 30-31.

<sup>322</sup>*Ibid*, pp.31-32.

younger generations of Turkish Cypriots were brought up in accordance with Kemalist principles.

## **CHAPTER 6 – THE TURKISH CYPRIOTS IN THE 1920s – THE EMERGENCE OF THE NATIONALIST ELITE AND THE QUESTIONING OF LOYALTY TO THE COLONIAL GOVERNMENT**

The disastrous outcome of the First World War for the Ottoman Empire, the dissolution of the Empire and the War of Independence caused worry among Turkish communities in Anatolia, the Balkans and the Middle East. In addition to the concern caused by the developments in Anatolia, the Turkish Cypriots were facing another danger, namely Greek Cypriot demands for the unification of the island with Greece. After the end of the war, the ban on the Turkish Cypriot press was lifted and the first attempts to organize a Turkish Cypriot challenge to demands for *Enosis* were made. The successful outcome of the Turkish War of Independence and the subsequent consolidation of the Kemalist regime in Turkey facilitated the appearance of a Kemalist party in Cyprus, too, that soon gathered around it all the forces that opposed the Turkish Cypriot community's close association with the colonial administration. The traditional elite was not willing to surrender its leading position, but the popularity of Kemalist ideas and the colonial government's continuous and blatant attempt to control the Turkish Cypriot religious and educational institutions resulted in the consolidation of the Kemalist movement in Cyprus and the questioning of the community's unconditional loyalty to the Colonial Government. This was manifested in the results of the 1930 elections for the Legislative Council and the convening of the second Turkish Cypriot national congress (*Meclis-i Milli*) the following year.

This chapter will discuss the political and social developments within the Turkish Cypriot community in the 1920s, in order to examine the extent to which Kemalist ideas were adopted by the Turkish Cypriots and how they transformed an until then traditional, religious community into an ethnically-defined one. Furthermore the chapter will seek to analyze the extent to which control of the *Evkâf* and the other Turkish Cypriot institutions was used by the Colonial government in order to control the community and limit the impact of Turkish nationalism – and whether these attempts were successful. Finally, the 1930 elections for the

Legislative Council will be presented as a case study of the dispute between the nationalists and the *Evkâfçılar*.

### **The National Congress (*Meclis-i Millet*) of 1918**

A few months after the end of the First World War and before the beginning of the Turkish war of Independence, in December 1918, the Mufti, Hacı Hafız Ziyai Efendi, together with Ahmet Raşid and Mehmet Remzi, editors and publishers of *Doğru Yol* and *Söz*, convened the first Turkish Cypriot national congress (*Meclis-i Millet*).<sup>323</sup> Representatives from many villages gathered at the residence of the Mufti in Nicosia and demanded that a committee be sent to Istanbul in order to safeguard the community's rights. According to lawyer Fadıl Niyazi Korkut, who was present at the conference, the delegates were alarmed by the rumor that the Chief of Justice, a government official, had been seen in the house of the Mufti.<sup>324</sup> The congress issued a statement of protest against the Greek Cypriots' demand for the unification of Cyprus with Greece and expressed the wish that Cyprus be returned to its legitimate owner, the Ottoman Empire.<sup>325</sup>

The congress elected a seven-member committee that soon dispersed leaving behind Fadıl Korkut, doctor Behiç and lawyer Con Rifat. When the committee requested passports in order to travel to Turkey, their petition was rudely turned down by the secretary of the colonial government.<sup>326</sup> In an apparent attempt to dissuade the members of the committee from further political action, the government arrested Dr. Behiç and Dr. Esad, imprisoned them in Kyreneia castle and warned Fadıl Korkut and Con Rifat to avoid further involvement with politics.

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<sup>323</sup>Nevzat, *Nationalism*, p. 248.

<sup>324</sup>Harid Fedai and Mustafa H. Altan (eds.), *Hatıralar: Fadıl Niyazi Korkut* (Kıbrıs Araştırmaları Merkezi Yayınları: Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi, Famagusta, 2000), p. 29.

<sup>325</sup>Sabahattin İsmail & Ergin Birinci, *Kıbrıs Türkünün Varoluş Savaşımında İki Ulusal Kongre: Meclis-i Millet 1918, Milli Kongre 1931*, (Lefkoşa, 1987), pp. 30-31.

<sup>326</sup>Fedai, *Hatıralar*, p.30.

Political conditions did not allow for the political organization of the Turkish Cypriots. After the ban on the Turkish Cypriot press was lifted, the first Turkish Cypriot newspapers appeared. On the first anniversary of the congress, Ahmed Raşit wrote the following in *Doğru Yol*: “I do not know how to define these moments. For my part, a great light of hope was lit in my soul that had been doubtful, until that sacred date, about the presence of the Islamic [community] on the island and, by taking away my despair in one moment, it created a hope that we shall enter a period of salvation.”<sup>327</sup>

It was the Turkish Cypriot press that undertook the task of awakening the community. *Doğru Yol* and *Söz*, followed by *Birlik* and *Ankebut*, often published editorials and articles pointing out the disadvantageous position of the Turkish Cypriots. Emphasis was given to financial activities as well as education. Witnessing the Greek Cypriots’ progress in trade, the newspapers’ editors wanted to draw attention to the dangers of the Turkish Cypriots’ dire economic conditions. On 2 April 1921, in an article published in *Ankebut*, entitled “Sloth in commerce is the reason for the collapse” expressed his fears in the following words:

“After it has been determined that the Turkish Cypriot community lives in poverty because of not engaging with trade, and that poverty causes political casualties; that Turkish youth stays away from enterprising, understanding that after a short period they are not going to be successful they show laziness and they abandon their jobs and the national sovereignty of the population is nonexistent”.<sup>328</sup>

At a time when Kemalist forces were fighting in Anatolia and Greek Cypriots were repeating their demands for *Enosis*, the press expressed the fear that the Turkish Cypriot community’s lack of competitiveness would undermine its national existence.

Watching Greek Cypriot progress in education, the Turkish Cypriot press was quick to point out the deficiencies of the Turkish schools. After news was circulated that the foundations for a Greek Cypriot middle school had been laid in the city of Famagusta, *Doğru Yol* published the following article:

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<sup>327</sup> *Doğru Yol* newspaper, 15 December 1919 quoted in İsmail, Birinci, *Kıbrıs Türkünün*, p.33.

<sup>328</sup> *Ankebut*, 2 April 1921 quoted in Ahmet An, *Kıbrıs Türk Toplumunun Geri Kalmışlığı*, (Girne: Kültür ve Sanat Yayınları, 2006), p.32.

Against the interest that our Christian fellow citizens show in education, the insufficiency and the miserable conditions of our schools is a sign of our ignorance. We cannot know when similar donations will come to light and when we will adorn our columns with such news that will cheer up our hearts. We wonder whether we will have the happiness to see a good proprietor take the first step for the high school that our country needs more than anything.<sup>329</sup>

The issue of backwardness was a common theme in the Turkish Cypriot press during the Turkish War of Independence, but even more after the Kemalist revolution set out its principles for reforming the Turkish nation. The pressure felt by Greek Cypriot irredentism fueled the need to modernize education, since it was felt that only in this way would the Turkish Cypriot community overcome the disadvantageous political position that threatened its national existence. After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey and the launch of the Kemalist reforms, the Muslims of Cyprus were also to be transformed into Turks. Like the Anatolian Turks, Cypriot Turks too needed to follow the Kemalist reforms and enter an era of enlightenment.<sup>330</sup> For the Turkish Cypriots, the need for modernization was more urgent, given that the progress of their Greek Cypriot fellow citizens would leave the Turkish community behind and would allow the Greek Cypriots to accumulate wealth and further promote the cause of *Enosis*. The issues of the Turkish Cypriots' lack of competitiveness and dependency on Greek Cypriot merchants were raised by *Ankebut* in 1921:

“Our farmers, grape growers, tradesmen strive day and night and produce thousands of goods that our Greek rivals are shipping abroad. This means that there’s one easy and effortless job left to our rival, which means that they become mediators to our consumption and our production. Those familiar with trade know that the mediators are more relaxed than the producers, their position is always safe and their profits are proportionally big. If the profit of the two elements of the island are taken into consideration aren’t we, the Turks, the sponsors of the giant businesses of our rivals who consider us enemies? The Greek has always searched for profit in the Turk. He has again obtained today’s wealth and

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<sup>329</sup>Doğru Yol, 10 October 1920, quoted in An, *Kıbrıs*, p.9.

<sup>330</sup>For the role of education among the Turkish Cypriots see Bryant, *Imagining the Modern*, pp. 148-155.



comfort through the Turk. Nevertheless the Turk has never harmed the Greek.”<sup>331</sup>

The political and financial condition of the Turkish Cypriots could be attributed to the lack of a united leadership. In an editorial in *Doğru Yol* in October 1919, under the title “Our Position in the island”, Ahmet Raşid referred to the issue in the following words:

Our life is taken up with factions, enmity, revenge. Especially our leaders. It is not a difficult thing to see the end, when the father is against the son. This state of ours made us directly or indirectly helpers of the other element. We gave the arm to the enemy with our own hand. [...] It is our duty to try hand in hand and love each other and thereby save our society and country.<sup>332</sup>

After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the Turkish Cypriots regained their confidence and found in Mustafa Kemal not only the saviour of the Turkish nation but also the provider of a new identity that replaced that of the Ottoman-Muslim Cypriot.<sup>333</sup> The Turkish Cypriots expressed their faith in Mustafa Kemal and his new Turkey because he was seen a progressive leader who could lead the community to enlightenment. Yet the Turkish Cypriot community still lacked a personality who could rise up to become a leader like Mustafa Kemal, who would defend the Turkish Cypriots against the Greek Cypriots and the colonial government. Until the first half of the 1920s, loyalty to the Colonial Government and control over the Muslim institutions prevented the emergence of such a personality.

The *Evkâf* delegate could have become the Turkish Cypriot leader, if it were not for the close cooperation with the British that had caused the reaction of the nationalist press. Already from the early 1920s, the *Evkâf* delegate quite often became the target of the Kemalist press. On various occasions, *Söz* newspaper published critical comments on the function of the *Evkâf*, suggesting cases of corruption or maladministration. Bearing in mind the nationalists’ objection to governmental control over the *Evkâf*, it is no wonder that the newspaper often attacked the *Evkâf* delegates even if the name of Musa İrfan was not always

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<sup>331</sup>Ankebut, 21 May 1921, in An, *Kıbrıslı*, p. 34.

<sup>332</sup>SA1/1153/1919, extract from *Doğru Yol*, 24, 6 October 1919.

<sup>333</sup>Bryant, *Imagining*, p.152.

explicitly mentioned. In one case, *Söz* complained about what they considered a case of overspending regarding a property in Famagusta. In the article, the newspaper attacked the *Evkâf* and the government for supporting individuals of Armenian origin. The style and language of the article is quite aggressive:

The officials of the *Evkâf* Department whose duty consists of managing the Moslem *Evkâf* within the boards of certain prescribed laws and rules, have a strange mentality and it is this: To endeavour to defend those persons who are hostile to Turkey and to secure a living for such persons! It is really difficult to ascertain the source and motive of this mentality which is diametrically opposed to this duty. [...] A person called Hafuz Ali Zihni who had cooperated with the Armenians soon after the French occupation of Adana and had caused many tortures to the Turks and had reported to the French people the children of the Turks who had defended the country and had caused the death of such Turks with many tortures. This man came to this country with certain Armenians after the occupation of Adana by Kemalists. He was defended by the *Evkâf* and a residence was secured for him in a school.<sup>334</sup>

It is interesting that the article referred to the sensitive issue of the occupation of Anatolia during the Turkish War of Independence, which surely aroused patriotic feeling among the readers. The author, presumably the editor Mehmet Ramzi, accused the *Evkâf* delegates of renting a coffee shop in Nicosia to another Armenian subject, playing the religion card this time: “At present let us try and understand the reason why a coffee-shop that is the property of the Vaqf, is taken away from a Muslim and given to an Armenian and let us try to ascertain the mystery of compelling all the Turks to go to an Armenian Coffee-shop on these sacred days of *Bayram*!”

In this way, the newspaper attempted to connect the *Evkâf* with anti-Turkish activities, in order to convince its readers that the said institution was not only run in a way harmful for Turkish Cypriot interests; it also turned against the interests of the Turkish nation. Knowing that the government policy on the *Evkâf* was irrevocable, the nationalist press attempted to create a feeling among its readers that the national faction was the only one able to safeguard the interests of the community against the *İngilizci* or *Evkâfçı*, the supporters of British policy.

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<sup>334</sup>SA/1311/1923, extract from *Söz*, 24-29, 12 July 1924.

The implementation of the Kemalist reforms was considered of utmost importance for the nationalist faction. This would prove that the Turkish Cypriots were keeping pace with the motherland and also that they were following the path of modernization that would enable them to compete with the Greek Cypriots. The colonial government did not pose a significant obstacle to the secularization process. The major Muslim institutions were already under the control of the government and it was in the nature of Cypriot Islam that it raised only limited resistance to the secularization reforms. Polygamy was abolished and the fez was gradually replaced by the *şapka* (the European hat). Bryant gives another explanation as to why the Kemalist reforms were embraced by the Turkish Cypriots with greater enthusiasm than that of the Turks in Anatolia. The Kemalist reforms constituted part of the civic nationalism project that spoke of the need for progress and modernization. That need was almost universally shared by the Turkish Cypriots and that explains the zeal that the community demonstrated in the implementation of the reforms.<sup>335</sup>

The implementation of the language reform in 1928 met no serious resistance either. Already from the early years of the Turkish War of Independence, the Turkish Cypriot schools played a role in the diffusion of Kemalism. Niyazi Berkes, a well-known Turkish historian of Cypriot origin, remembers that most of his teachers were Kemalists who had returned to the island after the end of the war.<sup>336</sup> Berkes also remembers that the Turkish audience would watch plays about the Turkish War of Independence in Greek Cypriot-owned theatres, since the community did not own its own theatre.<sup>337</sup> In 1923, Faiz Kaymak, a young primary school teacher in Limassol, described the climate in the schools in the following words: “After the proclamation of the Republic, our fight against the colonial administration started growing. We were taking power from Atatürk and we were not afraid to fight. After I completed my High School education in 1923-1924 and started teaching our first duty was to

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<sup>335</sup>Bryant, *Imagining*, pp. 232-33.

<sup>336</sup>Niyazi Berkes, *Unutulan Yıllar* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1997), p. 37.

<sup>337</sup>*Ibid.*, p.37

teach Atatürk to the students; to explain his greatness and importance. For this goal I exerted great effort.”<sup>338</sup>

Just as their Greek Cypriot fellow citizens celebrated mainland Greek holidays, the Turkish Cypriots also started celebrating Turkish national days by decorating their houses, schools and other public spaces with Turkish flags and portraits of the founder and president of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and the war hero and prime minister, İsmet İnönü. Turkish republican leaders soon became quite popular among the Turkish Cypriots and, with the consolidation of the Kemalist regime, Kemalist ideals were greatly accepted. However, there were cases of Turkish Cypriots who did not agree with the secularization process and expressed their discontent publicly. According to police reports in November 1924, a schoolmaster from Kaymaklı in Nicosia accused Mustafa Kemal of being “the son of a Jew” and of ruining the [Turkish] nation rather than protecting it. On another occasion, the same individual, when asked whether they [the Turkish Cypriots] should pray in the name of the Sultan or in the name of the Turkish constitution, said that “they should pray in the name of the Sultan as Mustapha Kemal has set aside the Koran and he has also removed the veils (*yaşmak*) from the women”.<sup>339</sup> These comments were made in front of a woman under the name of Aishe Said, who then reported them to men from the village of Mathiati. This is indicative of the levels of popularity of Kemal Atatürk among the Turkish Cypriots. The discourse, on the other hand, shows that the reforms had an impact on the community and raised tensions. The report followed a publication by *Doğru Yol*, addressed to the King’s Advocate, which referred to the schoolmaster and his insulting comments and, appealing to the friendly relations between England and Turkey, requested his prosecution.<sup>340</sup>

The author of the article avoided an aggressive tone, as it was addressed to a government officer. In an attempt to press for the prosecution of the schoolmaster who used

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<sup>338</sup>Hüseyin Mehmet Ateşin, *Kıbrıslı “Müslüman”ların “Türk”leşme ve “Laik”leşme serüveni (1925-1975)* (İstanbul: Marifet Yayınları, 1999), p. 24.

<sup>339</sup>SA1/972/24, Confidential report of M. Şevki, Nicosia Commandant of Police, 10/11/1924.

<sup>340</sup>SA1/972/24, extract from *Doğru Yol*, 226, 25/9/1924.

derogatory words for Mustafa Kemal, he appealed to the good relations between England and Turkey and the need to preserve the good relations between the community and the Colonial Government. Despite the grievances of the Turkish Cypriots, this loyalty secured a relatively higher number of Turkish Cypriot public servants and made sure that Greek Cypriot demands for autonomy would not materialize. In the second half of the 1920s, though, a combination of factors led to the further radicalization of the Turkish Cypriots and the predominance of the Kemalist elite over the pro-English traditionalists.

### **The rise of Mehmet Münir and the further institutionalization of Turkish Cypriot organizations**

In 1925, *Evkâf* delegate Musa İrfan died unexpectedly, after twenty-one years in office. Due to his close association with the colonial government, he was often condemned by the nationalist press for failing to safeguard Turkish Cypriot interests. Hence, his death caused hope that the government would appoint someone who would put the community's interests before his own.<sup>341</sup> Nevertheless, the government appointed Mehmet Münir Bey, a lawyer who had long served in the government and, like his predecessor, was considered too pro-British. Born in 1890, Mehmet Münir Bey served for about twenty years at the Treasury Department. He studied law in London and in 1922 he became a barrister. Like his predecessor, he was a member in various communal institutions. A few months after his appointment, he was elected member of the Legislative Council in the electoral district of Nicosia-Kyrenia with an ample majority of 2,189 votes over the 513 of his opponent, lawyer Bahaeddin Efendi.<sup>342</sup> The *Evkâfçılar* managed to elect their candidates in the other two districts, with Mahmud Celalledin winning the elections in the Famagusta-Larnaca district

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<sup>341</sup>McHenry, *The Uneasy*, p. 125.

<sup>342</sup>SA1/679/1925/11, commissioner to the Colonial Secretary.

and Dr Eyyüb Musa in the Paphos-Limassol district. Despite the popularity of Kemalist ideas among the Turkish Cypriots, the Colonial government failed to realize that they could not secure the support of the community through an alliance with a pro-British elite that was losing ground rapidly and that was often accused of putting its own interests before those of the community. The British had reasons to avoid the radicalization of the Turkish Cypriot community, since they already had to cope with rising Greek Cypriot nationalism. Turkish Cypriot nationalism could further destabilize the political order and deprive the British of the valuable support that the Turkish Cypriots had offered to the Colonial government until then. Hence, the British opted for Mehmet Münir who, according to a report from the colonial office, “is the leader of the Turkish population. [...] He is 100% pro-British, has the mentality of an old Turkish pasha, and has absorbed into himself every office he could. Nonetheless he has rendered good service to the British Government.”<sup>343</sup>

Mehmet Münir followed the policy of his predecessor, Musa İrfan. As we have seen, the *Evkâf* held great importance for the Turkish Cypriot community. It played a vital role in the running of schools and other communal institutions but, most importantly, through its considerable property, it influenced the everyday life of the community. The person in control of the *Evkâf* could control the community’s sources of income. The limited presence of Turkish Cypriots in the trade sector meant that the main source of income for Turkish Cypriot notables originated from land ownership and government jobs. A large part of the landed property was controlled by the *Evkâf* through the trustees, who were appointed again by the *Evkâf*. Hence, the trustees owed their wealth and thus their status to their relation with Mehmet Münir. Through his position as a government official and given his excellent relations with the colonial government, he could also secure the appointment of those Turkish Cypriots he deemed loyal. In this way, Mehmet Münir could secure the support of the Turkish

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<sup>343</sup>CO/67/247/98679, quoted in McHenry, *The Uneasy*, p. 138.

Cypriot notables by using his power as *Evkâf* delegate to appoint or remove the trustees of the *Evkâf* property and by regulating the access to government jobs of those favorable to him.<sup>344</sup>

A similar relation of dependency was imposed on the craft workers and tradespeople through control of the places of business. Since these shops and commercial spaces belonged to the *Evkâf* too, the amount of rent paid by the professionals could greatly affect their business. The scarcity of capital in cases of financial difficulties led Turkish Cypriot tradespeople into the arms of Greek Cypriot money lenders or to the *Evkâf*.<sup>345</sup>

The rural classes were also affected by their dependency on the *Evkâf*. Turkish Cypriot farmers either rented land that belonged to the *Evkâf* or worked on *Evkâf*-owned farms. In this way, farmers owed their income and to a certain extent their jobs to their favourable relations with the *Evkâf* delegate.<sup>346</sup> This clientelist network secured Mehmet Münir's victory in the 1925 Legislative Council elections and allowed him to extend his, and therefore the government's, control over the Turkish Cypriot population. Mehmet Münir's distance from the Kemalist party and his full association with the government fueled the nationalists and further alienated the Turkish Cypriot population from the old elite.

In 1925, Cyprus was proclaimed a crown colony. Apart from some amendments in the function of the Legislative Council that did not alter the balance of power between the two communities, this change produced no major changes either for the Greek or for the Turkish Cypriots. The Greek Cypriot nationalists perceived it as yet another obstacle in the path of *Enosis* while the Turkish Cypriots were content that the British presence was re-emphasized. Encouraged by the lack of opposition, the colonial government proceeded with a reorganization of the judicial system. Using maladministration and excessive expenditure as a pretense, the government abolished the post of the *Baş Kadı* and the three regional *Kadis* and instead established three Sheri Courts for the Nicosia-Kyernia, Famagusta-Larnaca and

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<sup>344</sup>Egemen, *Kıbrıslı Türkler*, pp.102-105.

<sup>345</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.

<sup>346</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 106-108.

Limassol-Paphos districts respectively.<sup>347</sup> As a result, the jurisdiction of the Sheri Courts was reduced and their independence was limited, since the three judges were now appointed by the Governor.<sup>348</sup>

Next in line was the *Evkâf*, which became a government department in 1928. This was done by an Order-in-Council, according to which salaries and other expenses of the *Evkâf* would now be covered by the *Evkâf*'s revenue.<sup>349</sup> In this way, the *Evkâf* officially became a governmental institution, but without the government bearing the burden of its financial support any longer. Again, this decision provoked complaints from the nationalists, who expressed fear that the centralization of the *Evkâf* and the termination of government funding further undermined the independence of the community.

The colonial government went a step further with the abolition of the office of the Mufti. When the Mufti, Hacı Hafız Ziyai Efendi, retired in 1927, the Ottoman Empire had ceased to exist and there was no institution in republican Turkey to appoint his successor. Hence, the government appointed Hurremzade Hakkı Efendi to the post of the Mufti. Hakkı Efendi was Mehmet Münir's brother-in-law and had served as a judge in the Famagusta-Larnaca district. At the beginning of 1929, the post of the Mufti was abolished too; it was replaced by the *Fetva Eminliği* (The Office of the Superintendent of Religious Opinions). Hurrem Hakkı Efendi was appointed *Fetva Emni*. The government went on to curtail the duties of the new *Fetva Emni*, attached the post to the *Evkâf* and ordered that the salary of the *Fetva Emni* be paid by the *Evkâf*.

The reform of the Turkish Cypriot institutions was completed in 1930 with the attachment of the Sheri Courts to the *Evkâf* department, which then bore the responsibility to pay for the expenses and the salaries of the judges.<sup>350</sup> Thus, the colonial government managed to bring all Turkish Cypriot institutions under its direct control. All powers were gathered in

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<sup>347</sup>McHenry, *Uneasy*, p. 122

<sup>348</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>349</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>350</sup>*Ibid.*, p.128.



the hands of the *Evkâf* delegate, Mehmet Münir, who, through his clientelist network, became the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community. This role was not acknowledged, though, by the Turkish Cypriot people. The colonial government thought that the Turkish Cypriot community would express little or no objection to the centralization of their institutions, because the British presence in Cyprus prevented the realization of Greek Cypriot plans for *Enosis*. Nevertheless, the British failed to recognize the popularity of the Kemalist movement in Cyprus. In their attempt to control the rise of Turkish nationalism, they aligned with a conservative elite that was gradually becoming more alienated from the Turkish Cypriot people. The *Evkâfçılar* were accused of siding with the government in order to protect their privileges. Mehmet Münir, the Turkish Cypriot *ethnarch*, was bestowed with so many powers that his influence was compared to that of the Archbishop of Cyprus, the Greek Cypriot religious and political leader. The Kemalist elite, on the one hand, challenged the legitimacy of Mehmet Münir, claiming that he used his powers to protect his own interests and not those of his people. On the other hand, many Turkish Cypriots did not agree with the abolition of the offices of the *Mufti* and the *Baş Kadı* and showed their discontent with the curtailing of their community's independence. They claimed that, while the Colonial Government showed no intention of intervening in Greek Cypriot affairs, they burdened the *Evkâf* with the funding of the now centralized Sheri courts, limiting in this way the already insufficient communal funds. The elections of the Legislative Council in 1930 provided an opportunity for the expression of this discontent.

### **The 1930 Legislative Council elections – the first nationalist victory**

On 15 October 1930, elections for the Legislative Council were announced. The nationalist elite considered the elections to be an opportunity to challenge the authority of

Mehmet Münir Bey. The popularity of Kemalist ideas and the objections to British policy with regard to the Turkish Cypriot institutions fueled the reaction against the *Evkâf* delegate. The Kemalist party needed a strong personality to compete against Mehmet Münir Bey. They found a suitable candidate in the shape of Necati Özkan, a wealthy merchant from Nicosia.<sup>351</sup> Necati Özkan, a successful businessman, was not new to politics. He was elected member of the Nicosia municipal council in 1926 and, in 1930, he stood as a candidate in the Nicosia-Keryneia district. In the Famagusta-Larnaca district, there was only one candidate, Kemalist lawyer Zekâ Bey, after the incumbent member, lawyer Mahmud Celaledin Bey, withdrew his candidacy.<sup>352</sup> In the Limassol-Paphos district, there were four candidates, the incumbent member, Doctor Eyüp Necmeddin, lawyer Ahmed Said, Köprülüzade Hulusi and Teralı Faik Efendi. Mehmet Münir's influence extended even over the two incumbent members, through his family relations with Celaledin Bey and Eyüp Bey's dependency due to his debts to the *Evkâf*.<sup>353</sup> Eyüp Bey's indebtedness to Münir Bey can explain his total transformation from a fierce opponent of the government to a supporter of government policies.<sup>354</sup> According Fadil Korkut, the reasons for Eyüp Bey's transformation may not be exclusively political.<sup>355</sup> Whatever the reasons, by asking for help from Münir Bey, Eyüp Bey became indebted to him and thus he alienated himself from the nationalist front, to the discontent of his former comrades. Governor Sir Ronald Storrs' comments on the main anti-Government politicians explain the government's incapacity to build bridges with the Kemalist opposition. "Celaledin Efendi was portrayed as almost illiterate and as entirely led by his relative Munir; while Dr Eyüp was described as quite unreliable though at present he is in debt to Mehmet Munir and completely under his influence."<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>351</sup>For more information on Necati Özkan see chapter 4.

<sup>352</sup>Harid Fedai, *Başhâkim Zekâ Bey: Anı-Yaşantı*. (Nicosia: Çarok, 2002), p. 21.

<sup>353</sup>G.S. Georghallides, *Cyprus and the Governorship of Sir Ronald Storrs: The Causes of the 1931 Crisis* (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 1985), p. 467

<sup>354</sup>Nevzat, *Nationalism*, p. 288.

<sup>355</sup>In lawyer Fadil Niyazi Korkut's memoir we read that Eyüp Bey was involved in an affair with a married woman that had got him in trouble. See Fedai, *Hatıralar*, p.94.

<sup>356</sup>Georghallides, *Cyprus*, p. 285

The governmental decisions on the Turkish Cypriot institutions were high on the agenda of the opposition. The almost absolute dependency of the Turkish Cypriot community on the Colonial Government caused discontent among many Turkish Cypriots. The abolition of the office of the Mufti, the abolition of the *Evkâf* office and the administration of the Turkish Lycée, but most importantly the concentration of so much power in the hands of Münir Bey, dominated the election campaign. The two major Turkish Cypriot newspapers had already picked sides, with *Söz* supporting the nationalist candidates and *Hakikat* supporting the traditionalists. *Hakikat* had been published since 1923 and, although it was as popular as *Söz*, Turkish Cypriot historiography has not dealt with its role. One of the main reasons for this neglect must be the pro-British stance that the newspaper kept throughout the 1920s and 1930s. According to Ünlü, the newspaper was run by a certain Derviş Ali Remmal, while its editor was Mehmet Fikri.<sup>357</sup> According to Turkish Cypriot historian Harid Fedai, the newspaper's main columnists were Midhat Bey, a translator working for the government, and Dr. Eyyub Necmeddin, member of the Legislative Council.<sup>358</sup>

In the period leading up to the elections, the press was the main tool for the Kemalists to propagate their views, while the *Evkâfçılar* used the columns of *Hakikat* to defend the government. *Hakikat* repeated the argument of the pro-government party in its publications. In order to support the *Evkâf* policy against the attacks by *Söz*, *Hakikat* criticised the editors of *Söz*, arguing "that they must be under the influence of writing with a view to opposing the Turkish existence in the island".<sup>359</sup>

In 1930, lawyer Ahmet Said, nationalist candidate in Limassol-Paphos district, sent various memorials to the Secretary of the Colonies, Lord Passfield, regarding the multiple positions held by Mehmet Münir and the incompatibility of the office of *Evkâf* delegate with

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<sup>357</sup>Ünlü, *Kıbrıs'ta*, p.73.

<sup>358</sup>Harid Fedai, „Kavanin Meclisinin Son Seçimleri“, *Yeni Kıbrıs*, Kasım 1985, p. 36.

<sup>359</sup>SA1 950/1926, *Hakikat* 7/4/1928, "The abominable observations of *Söz* emanate from a few wretched and valueless brains".

that of Legislative Council member.<sup>360</sup> These petitions were also published in *Söz*.<sup>361</sup> Ahmet Said's petitions epitomized the opposition's grievances regarding the overconcentration of power in the hands of Mehmet Münir. As was to be expected, the government dismissed the petition, claiming that "the general objections are either self-evident or inconsiderable, but in the light of actual circumstances they are not impressive". The memorial was accused of being "replete with personal animus".<sup>362</sup> Eyüp Necmeddin, conservative candidate for Famagusta-Larnaca district, sent a letter to the Secretary for the Colonies, Lord Passfield, where he maintained that Said Efendi was expressing the position of only a few Turkish Cypriots and asked the government not to take notice of the memorial.<sup>363</sup> *Hakikat* newspaper accused Said Efendi on various occasions: On the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1930, the leading article criticized Said Efendi's second memorial with the following words: "There is no doubt that for the Turks in this country there are two hostile fronts. The one is commanded by the Greeks themselves and the other by Said Efendi and his Greek colleague Papaioannou. The second front attracted very much the attention of the Turkish people. They saw that the Greek anti-*Evkâf* activities in the Council, in the press and in other circles are exactly followed and imitated by Said Efendi."<sup>364</sup> A few weeks later, *Hakikat* attacked Said Efendi's memorials, accusing him of "following the Greek policy" and having the desire "to substitute the Delegate with a man who will simply obey the Greeks".<sup>365</sup> In another article, *Hakikat* once again accused Said Efendi of siding with the Greek Cypriots and claimed that it was *Söz* that had asked for the abolition of the Turkish Cypriot Muslim institutions.<sup>366</sup> A week later, *Hakikat* accused Said Hoca and the anti-*Evkâf* clique of having an *entente* with the Greek Cypriots.<sup>367</sup> It is interesting that *Hakikat* played the treachery card accusing the anti-*Evkâf*

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<sup>360</sup>CO 67/215/13, Said to Passfield, 21/4/1930, 25/6/1930, 31/7/1930.

<sup>361</sup>PIO, *Söz*, 14/8/1930.

<sup>362</sup>CO 67/235/13, Heaton to Passfield.

<sup>363</sup>CO 67/235/13, Necmeddin to Passfield.

<sup>364</sup>SA1 950/26, *Hakikat* 453, 30/6/1930, "Said Efendi's second Memorial.

<sup>365</sup>SA1 956/1926, *Hakikat*, 454, 14/7/1930.

<sup>366</sup>SA1 956/1926, *Hakikat* 457, 4/8/1930.

<sup>367</sup>SA1 956/1926, *Hakikat*, 458, 11/8/1930.

party of siding with the Greek Cypriots. The pro-British party would always emphasize the importance of Turkish Cypriot “obedience” for the safeguarding of the community’s interests.

In the months leading up to the elections, *Söz* published various articles pointing out that the office of the *Evkâf* delegate had become a government institution.<sup>368</sup> A few weeks before the elections, *Söz* published an article by lawyer Ahmet Reşit, which described the aftermath of the 1925 elections. The author attacked the *Evkâf* delegate for being distant and indifferent to the people’s petitions and maintained that Münir Bey demonstrated a vengeful stance against all those who criticized him.<sup>369</sup>

In an article entitled “Turkish Youth, do your task” (Türk Gençleri Vazifenizi yapınız!), published in *Söz* one day before the elections, the author, Mısırlıade Necati Bey, candidate in the Nicosia-Kyrenia district, addressed the younger generation with a reference to Mustafa Kemal’s “address to the youth”, where he appealed to the responsibility of the youth to their country:

Whatever the duty of the fatherland requires, you are bound to do it and in this task you will not think of your family, your wealth, your future. I believe in these rightful words. There is an *Evkâf* power that threatens our country for years now, that attacks our people in any way and leads [us] to disaster. We have to form a united front in order to take us to the position of the other elements in order to fight and regain our lost rights. [...] I am convinced that I’m doing my duty to my community and my country. It is your duty to gather around me and fight together the national cause. The election is due next Wednesday. On that day you are charged with the duty to come to the ballot boxes and honour with the white vote those who share the same ideas with you. On that day maybe some of you will witness a great rise in your work or, for example, someone’s child may die. Postpone the burial for the following day. But never postpone voting. Because the dead is gone. There’s time for the burial. But the Election Day is concrete and definite. The following Wednesday turns a new page for the Turkish Cypriot community. This page has been turned in order for our community to take its condition and its future in its hands. We expect courage and bravery on your behalf on this marvelous day. You are charged with the duty to paralyze with your own vote the *Evkâf* power that organized all kinds of plots to blind and paralyze the community and does not appreciate you. [...] On Wednesday

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<sup>368</sup>*Söz*, 16/1/1930, Hukuk alimlerin tariflerine göre Evkaf Murahhası Hükümet memurudur, *Söz*, 18/2/1930, Murahhasın memuriyeti meselesi, *Söz*, 18/3/1930 Evkaf Murahhası memur olduğunu inkar edemez.

<sup>369</sup>PIO, *Söz*, 25/9/1930, 1925 İntihabından sonra.

night, once it is recognized that the *Evkâf* power is destroyed the people will celebrate and we will make the celebrations official.<sup>370</sup>

The article was published on the eve of the elections and the message was clear. Necati Özkan used the Kemalist address to the youth in order to appeal to the Kemalist ideals that had become popular among the Turkish Cypriots. The author also appealed to the Turkish Cypriot electorate's sense of duty, arguing that it had to remove the *Evkâf* delegate from his office. He asked his followers to sacrifice themselves for the "fatherland" (*memleket*), reassuring them that he had done his duty by standing as a candidate. Necati Özkan was influenced by Kemalist ideology, which called for the sacrifice of the individual for the fatherland. The content of the appeal and the tone used by Necati Özkan are indicative of the opposition's confidence that they could question the authority of the *Evkâf* and overturn the decisions of the government. The balance of power and government policies did not justify this optimism. Moreover, the Legislative Council did not carry the weight of a parliamentary body and was often bypassed by the governor with Orders-in-Council. Nevertheless, Necati Özkan and the nationalist opposition believed that they had the support of the Turkish Cypriots and were certain that by winning the elections they could put forward their agenda.

In an article entitled "Despotism is tumbling", also published on the eve of the elections, the publisher and chief editor of *Söz*, Remzi Okan, called his readers to use their votes to overthrow the *Evkâf* administration:

The *Evkâf* power, that fell over the people's heads for twenty five years in an unlawful manner and tried to strike all the power of the community by attacking people who wanted the rights, has become fairly furious in the last years and has lost its patience. We have estimated that the public opinion has been merging secretly for some time now against the tyranny and domination of the *Evkâf* power and we have reported that the elections taking place this year will be very turbulent and noisy. The *Evkâfçılar* have not been able to appreciate the power of the people that has been merging secretly, they are confused seeing today's movement and have come to a point where they do not know what to do and what to say. [...] In the speeches that were delivered in Yeni Cami, Asma Altı and Kanlı Mescit five to six thousand people were gathered without exaggeration.<sup>371</sup> These people are a power and this power has undertaken

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<sup>370</sup>PIO, *Söz*, 14 October 1930

<sup>371</sup>Yeni Cami, Asmaaltı and Kanlı Mescit are Nicosia neighborhoods.

a duty against the tyranny and domination that is threatening us. In this way the demolition of the domains that constitute this domination is a matter of one day. With the tumbling of this despotism a special revolution will take place in the name of the Turks of Cyprus. All servants of the fatherland have undertaken a duty in this revolution and are working wholeheartedly. There are some exceptions though that are found among every nation and are given the name “Dog of the nation”. Everyone, villager or city dweller, has understood that the *Evkâf* administration is an association that wrecked and scattered the community. And those related to this department are neither innocent nor reliable. Even if they are imams or preachers. Therefore the *Evkâf* power is obliged to kneel down before the power of the people and will do so. The people are demonstrating their common excitement that the tyranny and the despotism of the *Evkâf* is exaggerated and that the sun of freedom will rise for us from its rumble. At the eve of the revolution this is what we perceive our task to be and we believe that the outcome of the revolution will be manifested in this way. With the people’s vote the tyranny and despotism will surely come to an end.<sup>372</sup>

Remzi Okan went a step beyond Necati Özkan by describing not only Mehmet Münir’s *Evkâf* term, but also Musa İrfan’s term between 1904 and 1925, as despotic and tyrannical. Remzi Okan frequently used such harsh comments in his editorials and the proximity to the election date encouraged such provocative language. The idea of a common front encompassing all Turkish Cypriots against the *Evkâf* administration is repeated in this article as well, but there is special reference to the opponents who are considered an exception and portrayed in a derogatory manner with the words “the community’s dog”.<sup>373</sup> It is noteworthy that, like Necati Özkan, Remzi Okan too promised a brighter future to the supporters of the opposition, knowing that Münir Bey enjoyed the support of the colonial government and his dismissal was no easy task.

Finally, on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1930, Ahmet Raşit published an article in *Söz* under the title “may God make you prosper” (Yolun açık olsun):

Fellow citizens! Where are you going in such a hurry? Are you going to clean off a dust of fifty years? In that case may God prosper you. Go! Where you are going there is a miracle of salvation. Run. Don’t be late. Don’t wait even one minute. Suddenly gloom and darkness overwhelms you. Your head is spinning, you eyes are clouded and you’re about to fall again off a deeper cliff. Be careful. You won’t find anyone to drag you out afterwards. There, in the darkness, you will lose yourself, your

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<sup>372</sup>PIO, *Söz*, 14/10/1930

<sup>373</sup>The word dog (*köpek*) in Turkish also has the defamatory meaning of bastard.



honour, your glory and your offspring. When you came here three hundred years ago you came as a lion. Think what happened afterwards. What state did they bring you into? Think and find the reason. Know well this disastrous circle that has captured you. You didn't search, you didn't ask, you didn't doubt even for a moment about your wealth that you submitted in their hands. They fed on your happiness, your welfare, your tranquility and they poisoned you like a snake; know that they set you up an ambush. They will promise you very attractive presents that will open your appetite. Don't approach them! They are liars and bitter like the oleander of hell. When you taste them you may not feel that bitterness. But later all your property will be crushed and you will be alienated from humanity. Fellow citizen! Do not sacrifice yourself! Don't let the heritage that you will leave to your children be poisoned and chained. What you will leave to that pure, virgin generation should not be poverty and calamity. Know yourself. You are the son of the Turkish nation that has lived in freedom forever. Your spirit that is used to flying always up high should not descend even for one minute. [...] It's obvious from your hurry. You're running to reach your sacred ideal as soon as possible. [...] From now on a new life will begin for you, you will obtain the paradise that belongs to you, your paradise of happiness. Your nation will be saved, your existence will be saved, finally you will be saved. Stay close to Necati. Don't leave his back not even one second and you will be successful like you were fifty years ago. Go on! May god prosper you! All the wishes, of my heart, all my prayers are with you. Come on, fellow citizen, be ready for Necati's feast.<sup>374</sup>

The author, Ahmet Reşit, one of the most consistent supporters of Kemalist ideology in Cyprus, not only accused the *Evkâf* administration of deceiving the Turkish Cypriot people (*sana pusu kurdular*) but also went a step further by reminding his readers of the consequences of British administration. Although there was no direct reference to the colonial government, the author identified the *Evkâf* administration with British rule and in this way blamed both for the misfortunes of the community. It is interesting that Ahmet Raşit, like the *Söz* editor, only focused on the first electoral district and the election of Necati Özkan, not on the other two Kemalist candidates. Even if we take into consideration that *Söz* was published in Nicosia, one would expect a call for the election of all Kemalist candidates. Nevertheless, it seems that the defeat of Mehmet Münir was of utmost importance for the opposition, hence more emphasis was put on the first electoral district. Again, the defeat of Mehmet Münir was portrayed as the beginning of a new life for the Turkish Cypriot community. Such was the optimism of the Kemalist opposition on the eve of the elections.

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<sup>374</sup> PIO, *Söz* 14/10/1930 *Yolun açık olsun!*



An issue that caused discontent in conservative circles was the direct involvement of Turkish Consul Ali Asaf Bey in the elections in favour of the nationalist candidates. Necmeddin Eyüb accused the Consul of visiting his electoral district twice and meeting with the candidates of the opposition.<sup>375</sup> The colonial government did not believe that there was direct evidence of the Consul's interference in local politics. Nevertheless, the Colonial Government suspected him of acting on his own, not according to orders from Ankara, in order to support the Turkish Cypriot nationalists.<sup>376</sup> In any case, *Hakikat* maintained that the news of his removal from Cyprus on November, 17<sup>th</sup> 1930 "were received with satisfaction" in the island.<sup>377</sup>

### **The election results and the aftermath**

The elections were a triumph for Necati Özkan, who got 450 votes more than Mehmet Münir in Nicosia-Keryneia district. Mehmet Zekâ bey was elected as the only candidate in Famagusta-Larnaca district, while Eyüp Necmeddin was the only conservative candidate to be elected in Limassol-Paphos district, albeit with a margin of only 24 votes. The colonial government, as was to be expected, was not satisfied with the result and attributed Necati Özkan's victory to the attacks against the *Evkâf* delegate and the references to the issue of the administration of the Lycée.<sup>378</sup> The Kemalist press rejoiced at the result. With an article on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October entitled "The People's victory, the manifestation of justice", Mehmet Remzi focused on the defeat of the *Evkâfçı* party and the ramifications for the Turkish Cypriots:

[...] We don't know what these yes men will say about this stance that brought this whirlwind to the people, [the yes men] who attempted to present as a rogue class those who protested for the wrong and crooked policies of the *Evkâfçı* and exhibited their concern for the disasters that

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<sup>375</sup> An, *Kıbrıs*, p. 120

<sup>376</sup> Georgiades, *Cyprus*, p.468.

<sup>377</sup> SA1 *Hakikat* 464, 25/11/1930.

<sup>378</sup> For more information on Turkish Cypriot education see chapter 5.

will arise from these policies. We only know that *Söz* and all its fellow thinkers fulfilled the duty they undertook towards the people in an honest way and the steady and undaunted vote of the people has proved that with this victory. [...] From now on there's no turning back on the issue of whether the *Evkâf* delegate is a [state] officer or not. For with this result the people have categorically decided in that matter. Now the task that falls over the *Evkâfçı* and their accomplices is to respect the plebiscite and all of us as a common target to protect and defend the highest interests of the Turkish Cypriot community.<sup>379</sup>

It was obvious that the nationalist party gained much more than an election. The result proved that the *Evkâf* delegate and government policy were not invincible. The demand for the curtailing of Mehmet Münir's powers was expressed in a more urgent way that reflected the self-confidence of the nationalist front. At the same time, despite the personal attacks and the often harsh language used, the author appealed to the need for unity for the sake of the community. In the same edition of *Söz*, Ahmet Raşit wrote an enthusiastic article about the result:

"Now we all feel the lightness and quiet of those that have been freed from heavy chains. What was this endless and inexhaustible torment and pain? In the name of the *Evkâf* the reign of the dead had dragged the living through misery and derogation. As if some zombies from centuries ago imposed themselves on our national and social structure and were leading us to an abyss of destruction and decline. And we all followed senselessly and without will this blind power like a dead body. Nobody had the power to open their mouth. An obscure network of spies against the conscience and the ideas, imposed itself against the mouths that wanted their rights like a fist. Are you civil servants? You shall not advance! Are you a tradesman? You must starve to death! If you are a teacher you must always keep your mouth shut! Being a competent professional is the biggest sin. Are you uttering the word "Turk"? There's no bigger crime than that. Speeches, criticism all this is a crime. [...] Dear fellow citizen! Don't you see what you did with one strike? [...] You will be able to discuss your problems without looking around, without feeling anxiety or grief. You will swear in your Turkishness and pronounce it. [...] Your national pride will increase."<sup>380</sup>

The "old regime" is depicted in this article too as vicious and inhuman. Ahmet Raşit, however, refers to national pride that was humiliated and suppressed by the *Evkâf*

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<sup>379</sup>PIO, *Söz* 460, 28/10/1930, "Halkın Zaferi, Halkın Tecellisi".

<sup>380</sup>PIO, *Söz* 460, 28/10/1930, "Gazanız Mübarek olsun"

administration and the colonial government. In this way, the *Evkâfçılar* are portrayed not only as oppressors but also and most importantly as deniers of their Turkish identity. The readers are reassured that the victory of the Kemalist candidates will not only bring justice to the community, but also allow the Turkish Cypriots to claim their Turkishness (*Türklük*), which the government and its accomplices had allegedly suppressed.

*Hakikat*, the organ of the *Evkâfçı*, did not share *Söz*'s enthusiasm about the result. In an article published on 28 October 1930, under the title "Elections", the newspaper expressed its discontent with the defeat of Mehmet Münir and its objections to the good intentions of Necati Özkan and his partners:

Every individual, group of part must face the result of the elections with good will and must respect the new members to render good services to the country. [...] Many people believed that the only power which could support the Muslims in this island was the *Evkâf* power. As the result of this belief İrfan Bey had been the dominant leader of the Turkish policy in Cyprus for 15 years. After his death Münir Bey was considered to be a more suitable leader, as a lawyer, as our sole specialist in Finance, as a linguist and as an experienced man. Münir Bey, during the last five years, dealt with such great works that could only be accomplished in a long period. [...] Münir Bey did not succeed, this time, in having the majority of the votes on his side, owing to some reasons and to the propaganda made against him. It is a fact, however, that Islam in this country, which for many years lacked every organization and self-support, maintained its existence relying on the power of the *Evkâf*. Those who have set aside this power have, surely, undertaken a great responsibility. It is now for them to retain and strengthen the position of the Community. They may either succeed in doing so, or may drag the people into ruins in case they pursue a faulty or defective policy. Time will watch them. They must not forget that the time to come, which will be full of complaints, will ask them to render accounts for their deeds.<sup>381</sup>

As was to be expected, *Hakikat* defended Münir Bey, attributed his defeat to propaganda and maintained that government policies did not harm the Turkish Cypriot community; on the contrary, they strengthened its position on the island. Furthermore, the article expressed the fear that Necati Özkan and his policies would harm the community. This was an indirect reference to the value that good relations with the government had for the community.

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<sup>381</sup>SA1 950/1926, *Hakikat*, 460, 28/10/1930

Replying to a comment by *Söz* that “there is a limit to loyalty and obedience” [to the Colonial government], *Hakikat* defended the community’s loyalty to the Colonial Government:

The Muslim community in this country, which is in minority and in the position of self-defense against powerful competitors has been able during the last fifty years to hold its position with the sympathy and support of the Government; and the most important factor which has secured this sympathy and support is the secure loyalty of the Moslem Community to the British Crown. The smallest action that will show that this loyalty will possibly be shaken, will, no doubt, put the community into a grave position. We may have some demands from the Government and these demands may totally or partly be accepted or refused but the loyalty of the Moslem Community to the British Crown will never be shaken. From this point of view the words “there is a limit to loyalty and obedience” quoted above from *Söz* are very dangerous.<sup>382</sup>

*Hakikat* saw the realization of its fears that the alliance with the government could be shaken. In this article, the newspaper repeats the permanent argument of the *Evkâfçılar*: the difficult position of the community and its struggle to secure its rights could only be secured through the demonstration of loyalty to the colonial government. The newspaper is thus referring to the Greek Cypriot community as a threat in order to justify the maintenance of good relations with the government.

*Hakikat* was in open debate with *Söz* and the two newspapers exchanged harsh words. When *Söz* maintained that the *Evkâf* should enjoy the independence of the Ecclesiastical institutions of the Orthodox Church, *Hakikat* published an article accusing *Söz* implying that the “Ecclesiastical organization is better than the *Evkâf* administration”. *Hakikat* used this argument in order to maintain the argument that “they [*Söz*] are not ashamed of attacking our religion and declaring that they consider it an insult to be called Moslems.” According to the newspaper:

[...] the writer that denies the fact that he is a Moslem Turk deserves to be called by us a villain or national enemy. There is no doubt that these persons who pretend to be Reformers but who are nothing but money agents are well known to the Government. There is no seniority

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<sup>382</sup> SA1 950/1926, *Hakikat*, 462, “Dangerous Publications”.

whatsoever in their writings. They complain against the present *Evkâf* System but their object is to fill their own stomachs.<sup>383</sup>

It is obvious from this commentary that, just as the Kemalist commentators exaggerated in their articles that they were denied the right to call themselves Turks, the pro-government commentator in this case complained that their opponents were denying and insulting their own faith. The author proceeded to a more serious accusation, that of personal interests that drove the anti-*Evkâf* party. As we have seen, control of the religious endowments by Mehmet Münir and his clique entailed financial benefits. Although the nationalists did not accuse the *Evkâfçılar* of maladministration and corruption, they implied that the latter used their power in order to protect their own interests. In an attempt to refute these accusations, the *Evkâfçılar* claimed that the main motivation of the nationalists was to secure access to the wealth of the *Evkâf* and that they used the Kemalist reforms as a pretext. These were serious allegations and, due to the intensity of the debate between the two parties, they were frequently expressed by both sides. If we attempt to look behind the ferocity of the electoral campaign and the often extreme language used in the press, we can conclude that the issues at stake were the administration of the religious institutions and the autonomy of the community.

## Conclusions

The 1930 Legislative Council elections provided an opportunity for the anti-*Evkâf* party to test their influence and question the power of the *Evkâfçılar*. On the one hand, there was the omnipotent Mehmet Münir Bey, delegate of the *Evkâf* and supporter of British policy, who had extended his control over the community through a clientelist network. On the other hand, young and self-made entrepreneur Necati Özkan encompassed the anti-*Evkâf* power.

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<sup>383</sup>SA1 950/1926, Hakikat, 466, 9/12/1930, “After the Elections”.

Although the members of the Legislative Council did not have significant powers, the opposition put great emphasis on the elections. The defeat of Mehmet Münir was considered an opportunity to amend government policies regarding the Turkish Cypriot community. The electoral campaign focused on governmental policy, with the *Evkâfçılar* supporting Mehmet Münir and the government, using as a pretext the need to protect the community with the help of the British. The nationalists pushing for greater independence for the community's institutions accused the *Evkâfçılar* of using their office in order to serve their own interests rather than the community's. The nationalists placed great emphasis on the elections despite the fact that the legislative council members could not influence or dictate government policies. The following year, the Legislative Council was abolished anyway, after the Greek Cypriot riots. Nevertheless, the confidence of the nationalist party and the certainty that the Kemalist revolution would prevail in Cyprus as it had done in Turkey allowed them to openly challenge the main Turkish Cypriot policy, that of loyalty to the government.

The *Evkâfçılar* appealed to the need for stability and security, presenting themselves as guardians of the community against Greek Cypriot demands for *Enosis*. The preservation of the status quo was considered the only option the community had to safeguard its position in the island. The opposition was not only accused of being irresponsible or reckless, but also of serving the interests of the Greek Cypriots. Contrarily, the nationalists' discourse did not include any reference to the Greek Cypriots. It seems as if the nationalists' only concern was the British administration and its policy of strict control over the Turkish Cypriot community. At this stage, the nationalists were more concerned with the elimination of the anti-Kemalist party and the prevalence of nationalist ideas. Encouraged by the victory over the *Evkâf* delegate, the nationalist party, led by Necati Özkan, proceeded to their next move, the organization of the National Congress (Milli Kongre) in 1931, which formulated their demands in the most official way.

## CHAPTER 7 – THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF 1931, THE OCTOBER RIGHTS AND THE END OF POLITICAL AGITATION

One year after the electoral triumph of 1930, the nationalists gained enough confidence and power to proceed to their next step. The presence of two nationalist members in the Legislative Council soon proved insufficient for the implementation of the anti-*Evkâf* agenda. The Delegate of the *Evkâf*, Mehmet Münir Bey, despite his electoral defeat, was removed from neither that post nor from any of his other ones. In fact, he headed the *Evkâf* department and presided over the Turkish Cypriot School Committee until 1948.<sup>384</sup> The colonial government was not willing to break its alliance with the obedient *Evkâçılar* and side with the nationalist party. The former continued to control the Turkish Cypriot institutions and in return pledged allegiance to the government. The Colonial Government had a reason to tackle the rise of Turkish nationalism: by the end of the 1920s, parts of the Greek Cypriot elite had adopted an anti-Government and pro-*Enosis* rhetoric. The formation of a joint anti-government front was not an easy task and could only temporarily satisfy contradictory political interests in both elites. The government though had every reason to fear a common anti-government alliance.

Necati Özkan and his supporters, on the other hand, encouraged by their success in the elections, tried to challenge the government's policies, but the existing framework did not provide enough opportunities for an overturning of the status quo. Given that the Legislative Council did not function as a parliament and hence did not allow for political parties, the Turkish Cypriot nationalists were unable to propagate their ideas in an official way that could convoke as many Turkish Cypriots as possible and thus work as a means of exerting pressure on the government. Under these circumstances, the second Turkish Cypriot National Congress (Milli Kongre) convened in 1931, under the leadership of Necati Özkan. This chapter will discuss the importance of the Congress for Turkish Cypriot nationalism, the political activity that led to the Congress and the decisions that were taken. The objections to

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<sup>384</sup>Koudounaris, *Viografikon*, p.288.

the congress by the *Evkâfçılar* will also be presented in order to highlight the principles of the conservative elite and their motives. The second part of the chapter will discuss the October 1931 disturbances and the impact they had on Turkish Cypriot politics.

### **The road to the National Congress**

After the 1931 elections, the nationalist elite occupied two of the three Turkish Cypriot seats in the Legislative Council. The Greek Cypriots were represented with twelve members but this nine-vote majority was not enough for them to put forward their agenda due to the presence of six unelected British members. Until then, the Turkish Cypriot members belonged in most cases to the pro-British elite and, as a rule, voted with the colonial government. Now was the first time that the Colonial Government could not rely on the Turkish Cypriot members' votes.

Necati Özkan and Mehmet Zekâ emphasised the main issues that aggrieved the Turkish Cypriot community: the abolition of the Religious Courts and the office of the Mufti; their subordination to the office of the *Evkâf*; and the accumulation of all powers in the hands of the *Evkâf* delegate, Mehmet Münir. Seeing that the government had no intention of changing its policies, Necati Özkan focused on a more feasible target – a change of guard in the governing body of the Turkish Lycée in Nicosia.<sup>385</sup> For the nationalist forces, the presence of an English headmaster in the only Turkish high school was symbolic of governmental control over Turkish Cypriot education. After the elections, Mehmet Münir, Necmedin Eyüb and two British members of the Lycée were replaced by Necati Özkan, Mehmet Zekâ, M. Behaeddin and Hüseyin Zihni Efendi.<sup>386</sup> After their election, the new committee insisted on the appointment of a Turkish headmaster. The government did not deem it necessary to

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<sup>385</sup>For more on education and the nationalist party see chapter 6.

<sup>386</sup>Georghallides, Cyprus, p. 470.



succumb to the nationalists'' pressure and used the *Evkâf*'s funding of the school to force the committee to take a more conciliatory attitude.<sup>387</sup>

The issue of the Lycée''s administration offered a first-class opportunity for the nationalists to assess their power and force the government to change its policies with regard to the autonomy of the Turkish Cypriot institutions. The Greek Cypriots did not fail to notice this preference of the nationalists to escalate the dispute with the Colonial Government. When Necati Özkan and Mehmet Zekâ sent a memorial to the governor, Sir Ronald Storrs, asking – among other things – that a Turkish headmaster be appointed to the Lycée, the governor answered that he was unable to change his decisions.<sup>388</sup> The Greek Cypriot newspaper *Eleftheria* (Freedom) was quick to pick up the issue and accused the government of “carrying out a coup d’état against Turkish education”. *Söz* reacted positively to this comment in the Greek Cypriot press. In an article under the title “Our Secondary Education and the Greek Press”, the newspaper welcomed Greek Cypriot support in the following words:

It's impossible not to be pleased and grateful for this interest of *Eleftheria*. We shall never forget the value of this high interest and support that has been showed to us in such dangerous times. This support is by itself a friendly event and it will essentially warn both elements of the inevitabilities and necessities against the unfortunate destiny of the life under the foreign administration of Cyprus. In order for them [the Greek Cypriots] not to suffer tomorrow without any reason what we suffer today it is possible to embrace all actions and movements that will be applied to the Greek Cypriots.<sup>389</sup>

The author, Ahmet Raşit, went on, expressing the need for mutual support and cooperation of the two communities against the colonial government. Cooperation between the nationalist elites was not frequent and this was one of the few cases where the Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalists united against the government. In order to appease his readers, Ahmet Raşit added: “This is an expression of our need to follow a legitimate and necessary line of action, so as to search for solutions in order to protect our existence and save ourselves

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<sup>387</sup>Ibid., pp. 472-473.

<sup>388</sup>Ibid., pp. 474.

<sup>389</sup>PIO, Abstract from Söz, 12/2/1931, 476, p. 1, “Tâli Maarifimiz ve Rum matbuatı”.

from the attack of the government, we are not defying the government, nor are we falling into the Greek Cypriots' arms." <sup>390</sup>

Necati Özkan followed this line of action. Before the opening of the Legislative Council in February 1931, he submitted a joint resolution with Legislative Council member Theofanis Theodotou, asking for the abolition of the posts of Director and Assistant Director of Education and proposing the creation of two new posts, a Greek and a Turkish Director of Education. <sup>391</sup> A few days later, he joined Georghios Hadjipavlou, a Greek Cypriot lawyer and politician, in his campaign for the by-elections of 1931. <sup>392</sup> Necati Özkan was received warmly by the Greek Cypriot crowd, whom he openly advised to vote for Hadjipavlou because "he belonged to the Greek popular party". <sup>393</sup>

Sooner or later, this alliance transferred into the Legislative Council. The Legislative Council offered the nationalists another opportunity to oppose the government. As long as the Turkish Cypriot members voted obediently with the government, the Greek Cypriot petitions were rejected and the bills presented by the government were passed without the need to resort to an Order-in-Council. Necati Özkan realized that the Turkish Cypriot nationalists could join the Greek Cypriot *Enosis* in the Council, in order to secure a united front against the government. Indeed, on various occasions following his election, Necati Özkan voted with his Greek Cypriot colleagues, in this way blocking the government's work and forcing the Governor to resort to an Order-in-Council. <sup>394</sup> When a Customs Bill was blocked in the Council, the Governor reacted angrily, calling Necati Özkan the "thirteenth Greek", "a man of straw, who had been influenced by the Turkish Consul, Asaf Bey, who "had succeeded in creating a small but active element of opposition to the loyal Turkish majority". <sup>395</sup>

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<sup>390</sup>Ibid., p.2

<sup>391</sup>Georghallides, *Cyprus*, p.475.

<sup>392</sup>In April 1931 by-elections were held for the filling of a vacant seat after the annulment of the Greek Cypriot member Antonis Triantafyllou's election.

<sup>393</sup>Georghallides, *Cyprus*, p. 475.

<sup>394</sup>Ibid., p. 483.

<sup>395</sup>Sir Ronald Storrs, *Orientalism* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1937), pp. 588-589.

What the Colonial Government failed to realize was that the Kemalist party was not just a minority, and that the unconditional loyalty of the community could no longer satisfy the needs of an increasingly politicized elite, which had been fascinated by the achievements of the Kemalist regime in Turkey and was not happy with the absolute dependency of the community on the Colonial Government. Their temporary alliance with the Greek Cypriot nationalists proved that the Turkish Cypriot nationalists' loyalty to the Government could not be taken for granted.

The emancipation of the Turkish Cypriot nationalists from the control of the Colonial Government was yet to be expressed in a more vivid way. However, that happened at the National Congress on May 1, 1931. A week before, Necati Özkan, who was one of the organizers of the congress, made an open call for the participation of the Turkish Cypriots:

To the honorable Turkish Cypriot people,  
Dear honorable compatriots,

There's no need to deny that we live very delicate and extraordinary days. Today, ahead of us lie some quite urgent issues that concern drastically our community and are imminent to the great interest of our community. [...] The time has long arrived to solve these [issues] according to the wishes and the needs of the people and to inform the Government of our wishes. The demonstration of inertia and lack of spirit in this matter means that our national rights have suffered a loss. Our poor people will be again affected by the great damage that will occur as a consequence. For this reason it is our national duty to meet and designate a line of conduct according to the commands of our religion and our national needs and find the solutions that will protect our national rights that are threatened every day. It is my strong belief that no one should be absent from this call of patriotism. I'm sure that our honourable people will demonstrate this time as well the vigilance that they have always demonstrated in regard to the national issues. We shall therefore demonstrate the highest sensitivity in these matters that concern the people's existence.

Next Friday I'm expecting that the representatives that will be elected from every village and neighbourhood will participate attentively in the National Congress that will meet in my house in Nicosia at 10 o'clock and in this direction [I expect] all kinds of sacrifice from the people. [...] The issues that will be treated are the Islamic *Evkâf*, the Religious Tribunals, the Lycée, the Muftiship and other issues and I consider it necessary to add that all these issues are matters of life.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>396</sup>PIO, Extract from *Söz*, 23/4/1931, No. 485 p.2.

In this call, which was also published in the newspaper *Masum Millet* (Innocent Nation), Necati Özkan set out the main objectives of the National Congress: the need for the Turkish Cypriot community to organize itself against the dangers posed by government policies. The national congress is crucial to the Kemalist narrative. The Erzurum congress in 1919 initiated the Turkish War of Independence and the Sivas Conference in 1920 defined the national aims of the Turkish nation under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Necati Özkan, an ardent Kemalist himself, was the rightful leader of the nationalist party after his triumph in the 1930 elections and hence led the campaign for the congress. In his manifesto, he referred to the national needs (*milli ihtiyacat*) that were under threat and needed to be protected. The use of the term „national“ differentiated Necati Özkan from the *Evkâfçılar*, because the latter preferred to address the community using religious rather than political terms. Since the notion of a Turkish Cypriot nationalism had not evolved yet, with the use of the term “national”, Necati Özkan referred to Turkish nationalism and includes the Turkish Cypriots in the Turkish nation.<sup>397</sup> The issues in question, though, are of a purely Turkish Cypriot nature and one can trace the beginning of Turkish Cypriot nationalism, as this evolved through the later stages of British rule against British colonialism on the one hand and Greek Cypriot nationalism on the other.

On May 1, 1931, representatives from 150 villages met in Necati Özkan’s home. A committee was elected by the participants, with the responsibility to put forward the decisions adopted. Members of the committee were Necati Özkan and Mehmet Zekâ, members of the Legislative Council, lawyer Ahmet Sait, author of numerous letters against the *Evkâf* delegate, lawyers Fazıl Bey and Rifat Bey, publisher of the newspaper *Masum Millet*, lawyer

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<sup>397</sup>We should not here that the term *milli* (national), although it often appears in the discourse of the nationalists it should be translated as communal since the Turkish Cypriot nationalism was just emerging. In that sense the “national issues” or “national rights” are understood to signify the issues of the community and the rights of the community.

and *Söz* newspaper columnist Ahmet Raşit Bey and doctors Pertev Bey and Şevki Bey.<sup>398</sup> The congress, which lasted for about six hours, took the following decisions.

1. The Congress takes cognizance of its right to enjoy the same powers and privileges enjoyed by the other communities in connection with Secondary Education, which it asks most earnestly and fervently. It strongly requests and prays that the laws in force governing this matter may be fully respected, that the bodies constituted under the Law may carry out their duties and exercise their powers quite freely, that the sources of revenue to be utilized for the development of Secondary Education may be maintained as special funds for the Lycée, as heretofore, and that the Government may seriously consider and support the possibility of securing increased sources of revenue.

2. The Moslem people of Cyprus having very deeply felt the religious need for a Mufti and the great want of Spiritual Head, as in the case of other communities, the Congress revives the office of the Mufti, which existed for many centuries and which exists in all Moslem communities living in all parts of the world, as a post free from every effect and influence, to be held by a person to be elected by the community. It also considers it imperative that the privileges and rights which are enjoyed by other communities in this respect, and which were possessed by the Turkish community until 1928, when they were abolished contrary to its will and consent, should be acknowledges anew, that the cost of the organization of Muftiship should be defrayed from the Evkâf Treasury, which belongs to the community, that a law should be enacted prescribing the Mufti's qualifications, duties and powers, and that the duties and powers which are at present being unlawfully carried out and exercised by the Delegates of Evkâf, one of whom in a non Moslem, should be included in his duties and powers.

3. The Turkish National Congress of Cyprus warns the Government of the necessity of maintaining the independence of the Sheri Court, which is a privilege and an acquired right of the Moslem community, supported by Treaties and of defraying their cost from Public Estimates, as before, and expects that the Government should take a course of action, showing respect, thereby, to the rights of the community. In case this proves impossible to be obtained, after strong representations, the Congress is convinced that it is justified to ask that the jurisdiction of these Courts, which are maintained unIndependently and abnormally, which are not inspiring confidence to the community on account of their position, which are unable to protect and secure the regularity and perfectness of the family rights, which, as Courts, are found under the influence of the Evkâf Department, and which are entitled to exercise a very limited jurisdiction, should be transferred to Law Courts, to be exercised by the Turkish Judges attached to such Courts. The Congress insists on this, and considers it imperative that a Code should be published governing the cases to be tried in these Courts, whatever their form may be.

4. The Congress having taken into consideration the fact that the Islamic Evkâf are purely the properties of the community, and an institution dedicated by its ancestors for charitable and educational purposes, is convinced that the administration thereof is vested in the

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<sup>398</sup>Sabahattin İsmail, Ergin Birinci, *Kıbrıs Türkünün Varoluş Savaşımında İki Ulusal Kongre: Meclis-i Milli (1918), Milli Kongre (1931)* (Nicosia, 1987), p. 110.

community. Therefore, in the charitable, religious and educational interests of the community, it considers it most necessary and imperative that the Islamic Evkâf Institution should be relieved from its religious duties and be converted into a purely financial institution, that such religious duties should be transferred to the Mufti, who is the proper authority for the performance thereof, that the administration of the said institution should be entrusted to a Governing Body composed of six Turkish members to be elected by the Cyprus Turkish national Congress, once every three years, and of one British member to be appointed by the Government, that the said institution should be managed as a Bank and be governed by a law similar to that governing the Municipal Corporations, and that the Moslem Religious Properties Order in Council of 1928 should be repealed. This Governing Body will hold office for three years, on the expiration of which it will be re-elected by the said Congress: Provided that in case the Congress cannot meet on account of any reason the said election will be made by the Central Committee of the Congress. [...]

6. The Congress, relying on the express right of the Community, and also on the satisfactory statement made by the Honourable Colonial Secretary in the Council during the Session of 1931 in connection with the right and freedom of the Turkish Community to elect a Mufti, does elect and declare Ahmed Said Effendi of Paphos, the Advocate, to be the Mufti and the Spiritual Head of the Turkish Community of Cyprus, and requests that the Government may recognize this election.”<sup>399</sup>

The elected committee was appointed for three years and its office would be extended for a year. Its duties were to negotiate with the government over all issues that affected the community. A few days later, Ahmed Said was elected president of the committee, lawyer Bahaettin Bey, deputy president, and lawyer Ahmed Raşit, secretary.<sup>400</sup> For the nationalists the congress was the consolidation of the state of affairs that had been created with the 1930 elections. The congress addressed all issues affecting the community, but used the participation of representatives from all parts of the island in order to emphasize its legitimacy. The most important decision, though, was the election of a Mufti, whose position had been abolished in 1930. The demand for the restoration of the Muftiship and the election of a Mufti by the people was related to the need for the emergence of a religious leader who would unite the community and act as rival to the Greek Cypriot archbishop. Yet the Mufti would serve not only as a religious leader but also as a political one.<sup>401</sup> Hence, the demand for

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<sup>399</sup>FCO141/2445, 9-12.

<sup>400</sup>Ismail and Birinci, *Kıbrıs Türkünün Varoluş Savaşımında*, p.118.

<sup>401</sup>Aktar ed.al. *Nationalism*, p. 166.

a Mufti elected by the people could be described as a controversy, since the Kemalist reforms demanded that religion should be separate from politics and, in Turkey, the Mufti was appointed by the government. This controversy, too, was portrayed in the terminology of the declaration. It is interesting that the translator of the declaration in English, a government official, translates the term “The Turkish people of the island” (*Cezire Türk Halkı*) as “the Moslems of Cyprus”, respecting the colonial government’s decision to refer to the two communities using religious rather than ethnic terms.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of May, 1931, Ahmet Said issued a manifesto after his election, which was published in the nationalist press the following week.

With the help of God, and with the support of the people I have been elected at the Congress held on the 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1931, to be the Mufti of Cyprus. On this date a new era has been inaugurated in the life of the Turks of Cyprus. [...] My guide in religious matters will be the Quran and the Hadis, and my principles in social and national life will be the principles of civilization which led the civilized world to the summit of prosperity. It will be my firm desire to improve and elevate the religious sentiments and the morals of the community. My only supporter in these important tasks is the continuous confidence and assistance of the people. The awakening and the self consciousness displayed by the people. The awakening and the self consciousness displayed by the people to my great satisfaction and pleasure, have actuated me to accept this difficult post. I am aware of the limits, extent and importance of this post, and I swear today in the name of everything which is sacred to me that I shall not abstain from making every sacrifice in this respect, even if it be at the cost of my life, and that I shall not cease, even for one moment, from trying to promote the general interests of the people. But, I must add that I expect that the people also should perform the duty that is incumbent on them, so that my efforts should be remunerative. All communities that fell under foreign rule succeeded in maintaining and defending their existence and honour only by making such sacrifices and by close cooperation. This is the way of salvation for us, too.<sup>402</sup>

Ahmet Said, who was a lawyer but also an expert in Islamic law, tried to emphasize the legitimacy of his election in his manifesto, pointing out the confidence of the people. It is also striking that one of Said’s promises was to lead his people on the path of the *civilized world*. One cannot fail to see that the Mufti, elected by a Congress organized by Kemalists, adopted a rhetoric that was quite often repeated in Kemalist discourse: the need for progress

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<sup>402</sup>Nevzat, *Nationalism*, p. 394.



and modernization. Yet, by pledging to lead the Turkish Cypriots to “prosperity”, Ahmet Said addressed the community’s material rather than spiritual needs. The election of a Mufti by the congress did not contradict the Kemalist principle of secularism (*layıklık*). It was an attempt to endow the Turkish Cypriots with a leader who would support the community’s rights against the British and the Greek Cypriots.

The nationalist press, *Söz* and *Masum Millet*, commented enthusiastically on the National Congress and its decisions:<sup>403</sup>

There are not right and appropriate expressions to describe the national and general Turkish Cypriot Congress in its full sense. While the representatives from over a hundred and fifty villages of the island rushed to the centre surpassing long years with a tiny sign it was impossible not to notice the deep traces of the negative and harmful actions of those who played a destructive role over the existence and future of these [representatives] who pressed their spirit and conscience in this action.

There’s no doubt that a powerful and serious factor motivated the people and urged them to act from the Karpas peninsula to the city of Paphos as if caught in an electric current. What is this factor, this serious reason? Where does this power that excites the people spring from?

In order to understand this it’s necessary to draw and uncover the long and disastrous history of the Turkish people of the island. For half a century the destiny of this innocent people has been deceived and mistreated. Everyone benefitted from the weak structures of the Community and looked at the people from the angle of one’s personal benefit. Some bad guides were busy caring for their own present and future and crushed the Community; the people entrusted them innocently their rights and they neglected them completely. The community was losing something from its rights, its existence, and its honour. No hope, no ambition was left. A black shadow covered everything. Everyone was feeling a pressure arising from a spiritual need. The current situation could not go on. Something had to be destroyed, to be overthrown. The power that broke the spirit of the community that knotted its throat had to be crushed.

The people made the first attack and were successful. But it could not satisfy the people that much. The power that had been destroyed did not leave nothing to the people in the name of justice, in the name of its existence and honour. The people after the excitement and the joy of the first victory fully understood that there is a new need. Now [the community] has come to the point of starting again and recovering the national honour and the rights that were lost in the hands of those unfit and unpatriotic. For the aggressive power did not abandon its evil intentions of rendering the national movement fruitless and futile and confusing the situation. They were going around in the dark, hiding and attacked their victims like mischievous insects trying to paralyze the national structure with their murdering poison. The people sensed that

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<sup>403</sup>*Söz* was published almost entirely in modern Turkish while *Masum Millet* continued its publication in Ottoman Turkish despite the fact that it supported the Kemalist cause.



from far away and were waiting for a sign. The real meaning of the great motion and excited participation that was caused by the short invitation of Necati Bey, a devoted and people-friendly deputy reflect this sensitivity and this need.

There is no short cut in the people's search for their rights. This community had a Mufti for centuries. Nevertheless this post has now vanished forever. The Sheri Courts continued to upset our family life and to destruct our social structure. A stop had to be put to that. The Islamic *Evkâf* seemed like a terrible dagger piercing our hearts with our own money. It was necessary to save ourselves from this destruction and use it as a useful weapon for the Community. Our legal rights over our Secondary Education were harmed. It was an urgent need to reach the blessed day when an end would be put to that. In front of such serious needs for the life and the existence of all of us how was it possible and rightful for a Community to stay with their hands tied?

The national representatives fueled with a holy fire from the people overcame all obstacles and run to the capital defying the distance and all sacrifice; because the national task called. They came in order to draw up with their own hands the letter of salvation, to write themselves the National Pact. With a sincerity and calm that would make the most civilized, the most exalted nations blush and by defending the national rights they registered themselves in the most honoured pages in history

Our people have proved with this movement that they deserve the most exalted rights, the widest freedoms and the biggest honours. There's no excuse and no reason to deprive this honourable people from their rights that they defend with mutual support and power. The Turkish Cypriots are right to feel proud with this movement as much as they want. And we feel a deep pleasure with a belief that's coming from the depth of our hearts that we have reached national salvation.<sup>404</sup>

The nationalists considered the National Congress a continuation of the 1930 Legislative Council elections. The inability of the nationalist deputies to put forward their agenda after their election justified the holding of a national Congress. The author praised the representatives and compared the decisions adopted by the congress to the National Pact (*Misak-ı Milli*), the manifesto issued by the Kemalists in 1920, based on the decisions of the Erzurum and Sivas congresses. The terms "national" (*milli*) and Turkish (*Türk*) are found in abundance, connecting the community with the Turks in mainland Turkey. By associating the Turkish Cypriot National Congress with the Turkish National Pact, the author not only linked the Congress to Kemalist Turkey; he presented the movement as an attempt at the rebirth of the community. The congress restored the community's honour and conservative opposition was portrayed again as a force that was causing the destruction of the community. One cannot

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<sup>404</sup>PIO, Söz, 7/5/1931.

fail to notice the optimism of the author that the government was going to accept the decisions of the congress.

Details about the identity of the 150 representatives have been lost, due to a fire in Necati Özkan's house, which destroyed the relevant documents.<sup>405</sup> Hence, it is difficult to determine the social status of the participants and also the election procedures. Due to the absence of detailed minutes, we cannot be sure about the unanimity of opinions. In an article about the discussions and the decisions taken, we read that a certain Yusuf Ziya maintained that the Mufti and the *Fetva Eminiliği* were the same, although he contradicted himself, expressing his discontent over the abolition of the office of the Mufti.<sup>406</sup> The most important representatives of the *Evkâfçılar* were not invited or preferred to ignore the congress. While Turkish Cypriot historiography refers extensively to the articles of the Turkish Cypriot Press praising the congress, there is little reference to the opposition to the conference.<sup>407</sup>

*Hakikat* commented on the Congress in a rather ironic way:<sup>408</sup>

The world is full of wonders. According to a Reuters telegram from Paris dated 13<sup>th</sup> May, twenty persons, including an unemployed, an electrician, a waiter, and a pensioned railway man, submitted their names to the minister of interior as candidates for the presidency of the French Republic.

This action which will create a surprise in every part of the world, as well as in Cyprus, is not the only example of this curious ambition. Ambition, which, sometimes becomes excessive in bigger places, is usually more limited in smaller countries. An example of this may be seen in the recent action of those who elected a so called Mufti at a time when this office is occupied by the Fetva Emini, who is recognized by the whole country and by the British Government, and also in the action of the Pretending Mufti, who has readily arrogated himself the Muftiship.

Were the effect of this action to be confined only to ourselves, we could only laugh and shrug our shoulders at it, but, unfortunately it is reaching further and creating a disagreeable position. This is why we consider it not only curious but regrettable too. In fact, the Government notice dates 15<sup>th</sup> May, which is reproduced in this issue of our paper, clearly shows to us how this action was taken by the Government. The Government is expressly telling us that will not recognize this election under no

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<sup>405</sup>İsmail, Birnici, *Kıbrıs Türkünün*, p. 118.

<sup>406</sup>PIO, Söz, 7/5/1931, 486, p. 2.

<sup>407</sup>Ahmet An in *Kıbrıs Türk Liderliğinin Oluşması (1900-1942)* refers quotes various *Hakikat* articles that expressed the *Evkâfçılar*'s line.

<sup>408</sup>*Hakikat* was published in Ottoman Turkish while a limited amount of articles were published with the title in Modern Turkish with the main body written in Ottoman.

circumstances, that any person who arrogates to himself the authority of a Mufti without being entitled to it will make himself liable to prosecution, that the sole authority entitled to issue fetvas is the Fetva Emini, that this action is inconsistent with the true interests of the Moslem Community, and that it may produce grave results.

It is obvious that the question is too serious to be considered a joke. It seems to be capable of dragging the Moslem minority into the ditch, which has no other supporter in this Country than the Government. We therefore ask these men who are acting blindly: Where are you going gentlemen? Were the responsibility of your action to be confined only to you, you could do whatever you liked? But, unfortunately you are dragging into the ditch the whole community with you, and you have no right to do so.

You must realize the gravity of the situation which you have created hiding yourselves under the cover of patriotism and seducing some people.

It is not the first time that the Community is put into this difficult position. We still remember the trouble which was created by Vejih Effendi.<sup>409</sup> Those who had at that time thought that Vejih Effendi's movement was a national movement, and who had been so foolishly attracted to it as to drag his carriage and to follow him in big masses, are now laughing at it. But what did that comical action cost to the Community? Today's movement also may be the subject of a similar humour in the future? But, the community can no longer afford to sustain the damages of these foolish actions, which we denounce.

We express again the hope that the Government will judge the Moslem Community not by the actions of these people but by the traditional sentiments of the Community itself.<sup>410</sup>

*Hakikat* denounced the Congress as being contrary to the interests of the Turkish Cypriots. The newspaper questioned the legitimacy of the Congress by challenging the right of the nationalist deputies to organize it, on the grounds that they only represented a small part of the community and that the consequences for the community would be grave. The arguments and the rhetoric of the author are evident in the policy of the *Evkâfçılar*, who emphasised the importance of the community's loyalty to the government. The argument that the interests of the community were under threat because the nationalists elected a Mufti without consulting the government is groundless. It gave away, among other things, the irritation of the *Evkâfçılar* with the initiatives of their opponents. The author also attacked Necati Özkan without referring to him by name. It is striking, though, that the article asked

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<sup>409</sup>Vecih Efendi was a *Kadi* who in 1900 opposed the pro-English Mufti Ali Rifki Efendi. See Rebecca Bryant, *Imagining the Modern*, p. 100-1.

<sup>410</sup>SA1, *Hakikat*, 16/5/1931, 481.

the Government to disregard the Congress and reject all decisions adopted in the Congress. It demonstrates the close ties of the *Evkâfçılar* with the government and their distrust of the opposition's practices, as well as the distance between the two sides.

The election of the Mufti was what provoked the greatest reaction from the *Evkâfçılar*. In another article, published three weeks after the Congress, *Hakikat* attacked the organizers for "committing a fallacy". The author rejected the new Mufti, claiming that he was "not entitled to interfere with the administration".<sup>411</sup> When the elected Mufti visited the city of Kyreneia, a few weeks after his election, *Hakikat* pointed out the illegitimate nature of his election by "130 persons for 70,000 Moslems in the island". The article went on, denigrating the importance of the visit because the Mufti "was accompanied by 29 bicycles and 6 motor cars and those who were on bicycles were mostly children and school boys".<sup>412</sup>

The issue of the abolition of the office of the Mufti was not only controversial for the nationalists. The replacement of the Mufti with a *Fetva Eminliği* should have provoked a reaction from the *Evkâfçılar*, because it constituted a direct political intervention in the community's religious affairs. Yet the *Evkâfçılar* did not react to such a violation of Islamic practices. In fact, Islam did not seem to be the focus of their policies. In supporting the subordination of the Islamic institutions to the Colonial government, the *Evkâfçılar* protected the status quo and their ruling position.

Instead, the newspaper preferred to focus on the policy followed by the nationalists, stating that it was dangerous for the Turkish Cypriot community for yet another reason – the Greek Cypriots used it for their own benefit.

A Moslem investigator, who judges cool mindedly the recent state of affairs in Cyprus, can easily understand that the way into which some persons are leading the Moslem Community is full of danger.

It is a well known fact that the Greeks of Cyprus have been trying for the last 40 years, by various means, to secure the annexation of Cyprus to Greece. They are using every effort towards this end by their speeches in the Legislative Council, by their memorials and deputations and by employing permanent agents in London. There are also some persons in some unofficial and irresponsible circles in England, who are supporting

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<sup>411</sup>SA1, *Hakikat*, 23/5/1931. 482.

<sup>412</sup>SA1, *Hakikat*, 30/5/1931, 483.

the idea owing to the pro Hellenic feelings inspired to them by the literature and history of ancient Greece that they studied at the university. All these, combined together are trying to exercise an influence on those who are against Enosis. The negative replies which are up until now given to various representations made in favour of union, always mentioned inter alia, the fact that the British Government would not sacrifice the Moslem Community of Cyprus, who were loyal to the crown.

In fact the Moslem Community of Cyprus followed a correct policy of loyalty to the British Government and this policy came, more than once, to our relief, in most critical times. In recent years, however, some persons began to deviate from this traditional policy. These persons are being encouraged by Greeks, whose object is to separate us from the Government and to show that the Moslems are no longer loyal and worthy of protection. The blind pursuit of this policy will surely put into difficult position those who depend upon the loyalty of the Moslems of Cyprus in their opposition to Enosis, and will weaken their arguments; and no one can assure us that this will not result in the realization of the Union, which we consider fatal.

All these are sufficient to show that the new politicians are letting down the Community by their wrong policy and are facilitating Enosis quite blindly. The danger is visible with all its terrors. We must beware of this danger and take care not to lose our favourable position. The false pretensions of the Greeks in our favour are sufficient to awaken us. They stuck out from the Public Estimates the items of the Sheri Courts and of the Mufti. They are fighting with all their strength against the payment of the compensation of the Vakif tithes and they are even attacking the payment of a few piastres to some Moslem institutes and families which is an obligation inherited from the Turkish administration. Is it then possible to believe that they are now acting bona fide? Their object is no other than to separate us from the Government, to spoil our creditability and to deprive us of defense and support. Politicians and responsible persons of the day! Wake up and open your eyes, and beware of danger! The perfect way for us is to maintain our traditional policy and to cooperate with the Government quite sensibly and smoothly”.<sup>413</sup>

The article encompasses the main line of arguments of the *Evkâfçılar*. According to this, the present and future of the Turkish Cypriot community lay only in the continuation of British administration of Cyprus. Any attempt to oppose British policy on the island was presented as harmful and dangerous for Turkish Cypriot interests. *Hakikat*, in this article, again played the patriotism card. Given that the nationalists presented themselves as the true patriots, the ones defending the rights of the community and accusing the *Evkâfçılar* of working for the government and for their own personal interests, *Hakikat* resorted to the “Greek threat”, accusing all those who condemned the government of serving the interests of

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<sup>413</sup>SA1, *Hakikat*, 23/5/1931, 482.

the Greek Cypriots. Referring to the “new politicians” as irresponsible and dangerous, the author implied that the *Evkâfçılar* were the only power capable of safeguarding the future of the Turkish Cypriots. The only prerequisite was loyalty to the British Crown. The interests of the Turkish Cypriots were thus attached to those of the colonial government. The hypothesis put forward assumed that, if the nationalists prevailed, the British would abandon the Turkish Cypriots and open the door for *Enosis*. Such a hypothesis appears rather implausible at a time when the Colonial government had to face Greek Cypriot activism for *Enosis*. The *Evkâfçılar* appeared to be generally satisfied with the policies of the government and gave the utmost importance to smooth cooperation between the community and the government. Contrary to the articles published in *Söz* and the manifestos of the “new politicians”, the article refers to the community as “Muslim” (*Cemmat-ı İslamiye*) and not as Turkish Cypriots or Turks of Cyprus (*Kıbrıslı Türk* and *Kıbrıs Türkü*), which is indicative of their perception of communal identity. By referring to the community as Muslim and not as Turkish, the author chooses not to identify with Turkish nationalism and certainly not with the nationalist politicians.

### **The reaction of the colonial government and the aftermath**

As was to be expected, the British government did not legitimize the National Congress, ignored its decisions and did not recognize the elected Mufti. When the central committee of the Congress sent a telegram on the occasion of the King’s birthday, Heniker Heaton, the acting Governor, made the following comments: “Up to the present no kind of recognition has been afforded to it [the Congress] by this Government, and there is no doubt that the aim of the Central Committee on sending this telegram to His Majesty was to obtain an acknowledgment implying official recognition of the Congress.” Heaton advised against the recognition of the Congress: “I’m confident that your Lordship will concur that it is inadvisable that a few individuals in no way representative of the opinion of the large majority of their compatriots should arrogate to themselves the right to call themselves and act as a National Congress and that it is highly undesirable that any measure of

encouragement be given to them”.<sup>414</sup> It seems that the government, influenced by Münir Bey, had adopted the opinion that only a small percentage of the Turkish Cypriots were represented in the Congress.

Necati Özkan had expressed earlier his dissatisfaction with the government’s refusal to recognize the Congress, in an article published in *Söz* on the 21st of May:

[...] The government unfortunately didn’t follow this rightful and rational road. They didn’t accept and didn’t listen to the representatives of the people. We expected from the government at least to show respect to the wishes and the appeal of the people. [...] This people, this handful of Turks, is not as insignificant and dishonourable as the Government thinks. We are the sons of a nation that founded a big Kingdom, more extensive and magnificent than that of the British. We never deserve insults. The Government unfortunately has misused the silence and the kindness of the Turkish people.<sup>415</sup>

Necati Özkan appealed to the government, referring to the community’s honour, which derived from its origins. In order to achieve that, he reminded the Government that the Turkish Cypriots were part of the Turkish nation, but at the same time he also addressed the *Evkâfçılar*. Nevertheless, the colonial government failed to acknowledge the rising influence of the nationalists and preferred to depend on their allies, the *Evkâfçılar*, for the running of the Turkish Cypriot institutions. In fact, until the early 1930s, the Colonial Government did not need to take into consideration the opposition. With the help of Mehmet Munir, who had been knighted in 1931, the British managed to control the community. The fact that Mehmet Munir remained delegate of the *Evkâf* until 1948 proves that the government managed to handle the reactions of the opposition and was not tempted to change its policy. The Greek Cypriot revolt of October 1931 allowed the government to abolish the Legislative Council and curtail political liberties, thus making it easier to ignore the reactions of the anti-British party. The persistence of the *Enosis* movement in the 1930s and the improvement of relations between Britain and Turkey convinced the colonial government to attempt a rapprochement with the

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<sup>414</sup>FCO141/2445, 21-22, Heaton to Lord Passfield, 27/6/1931.

<sup>415</sup>PIO, extract from *Söz*, 21/5/1931, 488.



Kemalists.<sup>416</sup> This rapprochement, however, came late and took place within a completely different framework, under the autocratic rule that was imposed after the disturbances.

### **The October 1931 Disturbances and the Impact on the Turkish Cypriot Community**

The disturbances<sup>417</sup> that took place in October 1931 in Nicosia and other major Cypriot cities were instigated by prominent Greek Cypriot politicians and members of the clergy. The crowds that participated in the disturbances primarily consisted of young Greek Cypriots, many of whom were secondary school students. In other words, the October riots should be treated solely as a Greek Cypriot affair. Nevertheless, the *Oktovriana*, as the disturbances became known in Greek, had serious and long lasting consequences for both communities. I will examine the reaction of the Turkish Cypriot elite through publications of the nationalist and the pro-government press, in order to demonstrate the impact that the riots had on the development of Turkish Cypriot nationalism.

As we saw earlier, the reluctance of the Colonial government to intervene and limit both communities' nationalists' control over education led to a rise of nationalist sentiment among both communities' youth. As far as the Greek Cypriot elite are concerned, the end of Greek irredentism after the defeat of the Greek army by the Kemalist forces in Anatolia in 1922, and the lack of political and financial support for the *Enosis* cause from Greek governments, did not deter them from demanding the unification of the island with Greece, through petitions, memoranda and dispatches to the British government in London. Nevertheless whenever the Greek Cypriot members of the Legislative Council attempted to pass resolutions that would upset the status quo, the cooperation of the Turkish Cypriot elite with the Government ensured that the Turkish Cypriot members always voted with the

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<sup>416</sup>Mehmet Yaşın, "The Question of Identity and its Socio-Historical Basis" in *Turkish-Cypriot Literature in Turkish Cypriot Identity in Literature* translated by Aydın Mehmet Ali (London: Fatal Publications), 1990.

<sup>417</sup>The British used the term "disturbances" while in Greek Cypriot sources one comes along the term riot or revolt.



government-appointed members, in this way nullifying the Greek Cypriot majority. In the few cases where this tactic was not successful, the bills were passed by an Order-in-Council.

The high expectations regarding the British administration did not materialize and the pronouncement of Cyprus as Crown Colony in 1925 caused resentment amongst the Greek Cypriots. Ronald Storrs, who was appointed governor of Cyprus in 1926, was portrayed as philhellene, but he could not fulfill the maximalist demands of the Greek Cypriot elite. Greek Cypriot nationalism failed to capitalize on the anti-government stance of the Turkish Cypriot nationalists, although Necati Özkan had proven his determination to challenge his community's loyalty to the colonial government by voting with his Greek Cypriot counterparts in the Legislative Council. Despite the fact that the Cypriots were relieved from the annual Tribute in 1927,<sup>418</sup> the excessive taxation and the bad economic conditions due to the world economic crisis of 1929 added to the discontent caused by the government's refusal to give in to the Greek Cypriot nationalists' demands.

The political mobilization of the nationalists produced two movements, the National Organization of Cyprus (Εθνική Οργάνωσις Κύπρος), formed in 1930, and the Cyprus National Radicalist Union (Εθνική Ριζοσπαστική Ένωσις Κύπρος), formed in 1931.<sup>419</sup> These were both right-wing movements whose main goal was to promote *Enosis* with Greece. At the same time, however, the working class of Cyprus, which comprised about 25,000<sup>420</sup> people, saw that the recently founded Communist Party of Cyprus could represent them more effectively than the nationalist elites. It is worth noting that the working and the lower middle classes, regardless of ethnic origin, were indebted to wealthy Greek Cypriot merchants or to *Evkâf* delegate Münir Bey. In order to limit the dependency of the farmers on loan sharks, the government had approved the establishment of an Agricultural Bank in 1925. This caused an impressive rise in the number of co-operative societies from 46 in 1926 to 268 in 1928 and

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<sup>418</sup>Hill, *A History*, p. 477.

<sup>419</sup>Stavros Panteli, *A History of Cyprus: From Foreign Domination to Troubled Independence* (London and The Hague: East-West Publications, 2000), p. 118.

<sup>420</sup>Michalis Michaelides, "The Turkish Cypriot Working Class and the Cyprus Labour Movement, 1920-1963," *The Cyprus Review* Vol. 5 (Fall 1993) 2, p. 38.

326 in 1930.<sup>421</sup> According to Georghallides, this rise was due to farmers' need to organize in co-operative societies in order to benefit from the bank.<sup>422</sup> Nevertheless, the two Delegates of the *Evkâf*, İrfan Bey and A. E. Gallagher, blocked a loan from the bank that was to be distributed to Turkish Cypriot farmers through the *Evkâf*, on the grounds that the Turkish Cypriots lacked "initiative and organizing power".<sup>423</sup>

The low wages and the dire conditions of the workers in the two major mines of the island caused strikes in 1927 and 1929. Undoubtedly, the Communist Party of Cyprus contributed to the organization of the strikes.<sup>424</sup> The increasing influence of the communist party is demonstrated in a confidential report of the Chief Commandant of Police in Cyprus to the Colonial Secretary about the increase in the number of registered communists between November 1930 and May 1931.<sup>425</sup> The communists challenged the established pro-*Enosis* rhetoric and managed to provoke incidents in gatherings on the occasion of the Greek national day. They even managed to take down the Greek flag of the gymnasium in Limassol and replace it with the communist one.<sup>426</sup> In the short period of time from the establishment of the communist party in 1926 until the ban on all political activity in 1931, it was one of the few voices against the nationalist elite's agitation for *Enosis*. The nationalist fervor that had held Greek Cypriot society for over 50 years did not allow the communist party to develop into an alternative power, able to question nationalist policies. The small size of Cypriot industry and the limited number of workers made the formation of working-class consciousness a difficult task. The influence of the Orthodox Church within the Greek Cypriot community was, and still is, considerable and the clergy's support for *Enosis* ensured that the Church had enough reason to fight communism.

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<sup>421</sup> Mehmet Hasgüler, *Kıbrıs'ta Kooperatifçilik ve Tüketim Kooperatifleri Uygulaması* (Lefkoşa: Galeri Kültür Yayınları, 1996), p.18.

<sup>422</sup> Georghallides, *A Political*, pp. 333-4.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid, p. 334.

<sup>424</sup> Michaelides, "The Turkish Cypriot" p. 37. Michaelides claims that most of the labourers were employed in farms and about six to seven thousand were mine workers.

<sup>425</sup> FCO141/2464, Chief Commandant of Police to Colonial Office, 18/5/1931.

<sup>426</sup> Georghallides, *Cyprus and the Governorship*, p.607.

On the other hand, the communist party failed to attract enough support from the Turkish Cypriot community. According to Nazım Beratlı, this was due to the following reasons: the community was still in the process of replacing its religious identity with its Kemalist, secular one; and, since most of the members of the communist party were Greek Cypriots, educated in Greece, it was difficult for the Turkish Cypriots to identify with them.<sup>427</sup> To that we must add the stance of the nationalist press, which attacked Communism for being a tool in the hands of the Greek Cypriots.<sup>428</sup>

The conditions therefore were ripe for revolt. The passage of an Elementary Education Law and a customs bill that was passed with an Order-in-Council were the two events that provoked the reaction from the Greek Cypriot members of the Legislative Council.<sup>429</sup> The customs bill was related to the budget, which was a source of discontent for both communities because it was believed that the government imposed excessive taxes without taking any measures to reduce expenditure. When the government tried to cover a budget deficit with a customs tax, the Greek Cypriot members rejected it, while the three Turkish Cypriot members abstained. Hence, the bill was rejected and it was passed through an Order-in-Council, something that infuriated the Greek Cypriot members. The truth, though, is that the Greek Cypriot elite had become so radicalized that they could use any excuse to instigate unrest against the government. The role of the Greek consul in Nicosia is also quite important. Kyrou, a Greek diplomat of Cypriot origin, had actively supported the agitation against the government.<sup>430</sup> In the summer of 1931, the Greek Cypriot members of the Legislative Council met repeatedly, in order to decide on their next move. The riots were instigated by what seems to be an antagonism between the members of the council. On October 20, 1931, the Bishop of Kition and member of the council, Nikodimos Milonas, who

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<sup>427</sup>Beratlı, *Kıbrıslı Türklerin Tarihi*, p.87.

<sup>428</sup>See Chapter 3.

<sup>429</sup>Petros Stilianou, *Ta Oktovriana: I Eksegersi tou 1931 stin Kipro*. (Nicosia: Ekdoseis K. Epifaniou, 2002), p. 43.

<sup>430</sup>For the role of the Greek Consul see Georghallides, *Cyprus and the Governorship of Sir Ronald Storrs*.

had resigned from the Legislative Council three days before, spoke at a rally in Limassol. When the news reached Nicosia, another rally was organized in front of the Commercial Club. After speeches were made by members of the council and other politicians, the public marched to the House of the Governor. There followed clashes with the police and the House of the Governor was burnt down. The clashes spread to other major cities, where the rioters attacked government buildings and caused damage to infrastructure. According to the official report, seven people died and thirty were injured. Thirty eight police officers were also injured during the disturbances.

For the colonial government, the disturbances were an unprecedented opportunity to confront the rising tide of both Greek and Turkish nationalism in Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot politicians who were considered responsible for instigating the disturbances were deported or sentenced to house arrest. Using as a pretext the need to restore peace, the constitution was suspended and the Legislative Council was abolished. The governor took advantage of the extraordinary powers vested in him by the King and prohibited the flying of flags, restricted the ringing of church bells and undertook the direct nomination of the heads of the villages, the *Muhtarlar* and the village councils, the *Azalar*.<sup>431</sup>

While the government's decisions were aimed at confronting the Greek Cypriot movement for *Enosis*, the suspension of all political activity inevitably affected the Turkish Cypriot nationalist party too. The results of the 1930 elections, which had given the nationalists a straightforward precedence over the *Evkâfçılar*, stood practically void after the abolition of the Legislative Council. The Turkish Cypriot press of course commented extensively on the Greek Cypriot political activity, before and after the disturbances. The commentary varied according to each newspaper's political stance. In an article published in *Söz* on October 1, 1931, just three weeks before the disturbances, under the title "The Legislative Council", we read the following:

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<sup>431</sup>Ibid, p. 704-708.

The majority of the local Greek newspapers in the last weeks is publishing very harsh articles on the occasion of the opening of the Legislative Council and is calling their members to resign. If we consider that some of the Greek members of the Council are also newspaper owners we can understand that a lot of the opinions and comments published in the press are their point of view.<sup>432</sup> If the Greek members decide to withdraw from the Council and this decision is implemented in the first session what is the task of our members in the Council? We know that the resignation of the Greek members is connected to the attempt to unite Cyprus with Greece and in this respect the issue for us becomes twice as difficult. But it's a pity that the stance of the government and the deprivation of our natural rights has offended us as much the Greeks and had prevented us from supporting the government in any possible way. The honourable Dr Shiels has not yet given an answer, positive or negative, to the letter that our representatives jointly sent him.<sup>433</sup> Contrary to the desires and requests of the people the Government insisted in appointing an English headmaster to the Lycée that hasn't been useful and on the contrary is responsible for a bad administration and a clear failure and has paralyzed our only Lycée. Although each community in this island has a spiritual leader that belongs to the community and is elected by it the Government has refused us this right and has not even answered to the appeals of the Turkish Congress that met for this purpose. The Government does not deem it necessary to care every day for our religious and educational institutions and does not want to accept the right of the people to inspect and participate in the administration of the property of the religious endowments of our forefathers. All these reasons alienate us from the Government and prevent us from supporting her in these serious times. On the other hand we also have grievances that are serious enough like the ones the Greeks present and we don't have any profit and benefit from hiding them. Nevertheless it is very difficult to support a Government that does not want to recognize even our most clear rights and acts as she wishes when she is informed of these grievances. At the time that we take such action we are witnessing a disrespectful behavior towards our community and we are the recipients of the rage and anger of the majority that is quite obvious. We are convinced that before the Legislative Council meets our Honourable *Mufti*, head of the National Congress, must be invited to the general assembly and must address all these issues by consulting them closely with the people. In such case the Turkish members that will proceed to the Council will better understand their task and will not allow some unpleasant acts to take place. If the Greeks withdraw from the Council and it is proven necessary that we withdraw too, at least the reasons of our departure will be a priori known and we shall not be exposed to accusations that we are carried away by the Greek course of events.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>432</sup>The Greek Cypriot members of the Council that were active in Greek Cypriot press were Antonis Triantafyllides, contributor in the newspaper *Empros* (Ahead), Georgios Aradipiotis, editor of the newspaper *Iho tis Kuprou* (Voice of Cyprus), Kiriakos Rosides, editor of *Dimiourgia* (Creation) and Christodoulos Galatopoulos, editor of *Politiki Epitehorisi* (Political Review).

<sup>433</sup>Dr Drummond Shiels was Under-secretary of State for the Colonies from 1929 to 1931.

<sup>434</sup>*Söz* PIO, 1/10/1931, p.2.

The columnist, most probably the chief editor Mehmet Remzi, seemed to have anticipated the resignation of the Greek Cypriot members of the Legislative Council. Based on the news from the Greek Cypriots, the article attempted to remind the colonial government of the fact that the Turkish Cypriots were the responsible and trustworthy element that the British could rely on. But in exchange for the community's support, he recalled all of the open issues of the Turkish Cypriot community that the British had failed to solve. Comparison with the Greek Cypriot community was a common feature in the Turkish Cypriot press. The columnist expressed discontent that the Greek Cypriots had made themselves heard and obliged the government to pay attention to their issues, while the Turkish Cypriots' grievances passed unnoticed. It is also interesting that the columnist insisted on the issue of the elected Mufti, although the government had emphatically refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Congress and therefore the elected *Mufti*. Moreover, the columnist warned the Turkish Cypriot members of the Council not to support the Greek Cypriots' protests, because that would harm the community's interests.

A week after the disturbances, *Söz* published the following article under the title "Dangerous Activities and Outrageous Events":

The difference of opinion between the Government and the Greeks had recently become quite noticeable and acute. The resignation of the Metropolitan of Kitium and the approval of this policy by the other Greek representatives made the position still worse, and fired the bomb of a riot. Undoubtedly, this was a dangerous attempt; but it was curious to see that it was encouraged by the whole Greek press, and the public was led to a perilous and frightful path. How the Greek intellectuals, who are capable of judging everything, fell into this dangerous position is a psychological question to be investigated. We both regret to see our Greek co-citizens in this path which is full of calamities and evils, and at the same time we are perturbed to see the insult made to his Excellency Sir Ronald Storrs, His Majesty's representative in Cyprus, and the cruelty done in burning down the Government House. The Turks of Cyprus who constitute a peaceful and loyal community in this country did not possess any power enabling them to intervene and to check the evil, but, have maintained their peaceful attitude all over the island. This attitude is sufficient to repudiate the accusations of some persons, who try to characterize us as being anti-British. It is now well understood that we, the Turks of Cyprus, know well what we are doing, and on what sort of ground we are talking. We are very glad to see that the Government has seriously considered the

matter and has taken the necessary steps to restore the peace, which we fully appreciate and approve.<sup>435</sup>

This article was published on October 29, 1931, which was the eighth anniversary of the proclamation of the Turkish Republic. For this reason, the front page of the newspaper was dominated by photographs of the president of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal, and the prime minister, İsmet Paşa.<sup>436</sup> The text accompanying the photographs read: “*Söz* congratulates all our readers on the occasion of the National Holiday and wishes safety and prosperity to our great nation.” The aforementioned article is printed at the bottom of the page next to an article under the title “Today is the National day”. In this article, the columnist expressed his sorrow because the Turkish Cypriot youth were not able to celebrate the national day like their compatriots in Turkey, due to the curfew imposed by the government after the disturbances. *Söz* was a weekly newspaper and its previous edition, published on October 22, could not have included articles on the disturbances. The Turkish national day always made the first page of *Söz*, hence even the most serious and violent disturbances in modern Cypriot history were not important enough to make the headline. The fact that no Turkish Cypriots participated in the events was another reason. The columnist could not hide his satisfaction with the punishment of the Greek Cypriot politicians and repeated once again the claim that the Turkish Cypriots were the peaceful and reliable community. Unlike in the previous article, the newspaper avoided the expression of grievances or demands, because the disturbances had not yet cooled off. The columnist, though, took the opportunity to remind the government that the Turkish Cypriots were not anti-British.

*Hakikat* follows more or less the same line of argument as *Söz*:

The actions taken by the government after the recent Greek outrages were met with great satisfaction in all Turkish circles. Those responsible will surely be punished for their blameful crimes. They did not even think that the properties which they destroyed belonged to the country, and that they

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<sup>435</sup>SA1, 517.1926.1, *Söz* No. 511, 29/10/1931.

<sup>436</sup>The surname law in Turkey was passed in 1935 hence the caption underneath the photos of the two men writes uses the titles they were attributed to them in the battlefield, *gazi*, a title given to a victorious Muslim military leader and *paşa*, army general. For more on the Surname Law see chapter 1.



destroyed the wealth of the island. We are very distressed to learn that the damage done to the Government House exceeds 20,000 pounds and the personal losses of his Excellency are over 6,400 pounds. Certain Greek priests have been found to have participated in these bloody events, and the Metropolitans of Larnaca and Kyreneia and the exarch of Phaneromeni Church are amongst those who have been arrested. We knew that the Greek Church was striving for Union and spending money for this purpose, but no one could imagine that Greek priests would venture to defy the laws of the country and to disturb the peace of the island. It must be noted that the Turks have proved once more that their loyalty to the British Empire is unshakable. We thank his Excellency for the steps taken to restore the peace and to secure the safety of our lives and properties.<sup>437</sup>

At a time when the government was taking harsh measures against the Greek Cypriots, the Turkish Cypriot press rushed to ensure that Turkish Cypriot interests would not be affected. *Hakikat* had demonstrated time and again its loyalty to the government and the *Evkâfçılar*. Once the issue of Greek Cypriot political activity was settled, the *Evkâfçılar* were only threatened by the rising popularity of the Kemalist party. And this was not going to be an easy task to handle without the help of the government. The measures against the Greek Cypriot nationalists were also a message to the Kemalist party. The ban on all political activities could have benefited the *Evkâfçılar* by limiting opportunities for political activism. Indeed, when it became known that the government had abolished the Legislative Council, *Hakikat* could not hide its satisfaction:

The Cyprus Gazette and the Government Notice, issued after our leading article was written, notified the public that Letters Patent were approved under which the existence of the Legislative Council will cease and the power of making laws is granted to the governor. It is also notified that the Constitution of the island will be reviewed. Consequently, there is no legislative council, and no members of the Legislative Council exist for the present. This fact will produce good reforms in the Country, and will, no doubt, settle many disputes among the Turks. Because, it will give an end to the divisions created by elections and will settle the question of the Lycée, which was the source of many troubles, as the members of the council will now disappear.<sup>438</sup>

For the *Evkâfçılar*, the Greek Cypriot disturbances were a blessing in disguise. It gave the government the pretext to silence the Kemalist party through the abolition of the

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<sup>437</sup>SA1, 950.1926.Hakikat, 11/11/1931, No. 506.

<sup>438</sup>SA1 950.1926. Hakikat, 19/11/1931, No. 507.



Legislative Council. This also put an end to the presence of the Kemalist members in the School Boards and the municipal councils. It is no wonder that the newspaper rejoiced over the decision. After all, Münir Bey's control over the *Evkâf* and through that over the whole of the community was undisputed. The decision to abolish the Legislative Council "corrected" the 1930 election results and deprived the Kemalist members of all of the offices that they had been appointed to by virtue of their status as elected members of the Legislative Council. Thus, the *Efkâfçılar* hoped that they would continue to rule the community without any opposition. The members of the Legislative Council "disappeared", but the absence of debate did not solve the issues facing the community. The *Evkâfçılar* shared the government's view that the Kemalist movement would lose momentum if it disappeared from the public space. They were both proven wrong because, like the implementation of harsh and undemocratic measures only temporarily slowed down Greek Cypriot political activity, the Kemalist movement too could not be stopped with prohibitions and bans on political activity.

*Söz* adopted a diametrically opposite view to the issue of autocratic government. In an article published on 19 November, under the title "Towards Autocracy", the editor Mehmet Remzi expressed his disagreement in the following way:

In the telegraph that was sent by the Colonial Office to the local government, on the occasion of the ugly events that took place in Cyprus, there was a sign that a part of the powers and the privileges that were bestowed on the island are going to be taken back and that a new Constitution is being prepared that is suitable to the people. It is understood that the plan has been decided upon and it has become known that the Cyprus Legislative Council will be abolished. According to what has become known in the official announcement that has been published in relation to this issue, it is a measure that has been adopted under wearisome conditions and that it will be necessary to investigate again the future situation of Cyprus. As a consequence after the abolition of the Legislative Council the power to impose special laws on the country is given exclusively to the Governor. It is not known when the administrative plan that will be deemed suitable for Cyprus and the special constitution are going to be published. Nevertheless at some point it will be completed and will come into force. As the Cyprus constitution is being edited it is evident from the telegraph that has been published that the views and ideas of His Excellency the Governor have been taken into consideration by the Colonial Office. In that case, his Excellency the Governor will participate effectively and closely in the writing up of the Constitution. This decision of the Colonial Office can be justified given

that the Governor is someone who knows and has administered this country. Nevertheless the Turks of Cyprus who have demonstrated their loyalty to her Majesty the Queen and the Government from the first day of the English occupation of Cyprus until today and have proven this loyalty on every occasion have some quite important demands from the Government of Sir Ronald Storrs. Since we have expressed these demands to the local and the central Governments on various occasions verbally and in writing we do not consider it necessary to repeat them here. We would only like to remind that it is possible to grant to the Turkish Cypriots what they demand in order to secure their existence on this island and be able to live here. Therefore before the Cyprus Constitution is written it is necessary to research what the needs and the demands of the people consist of. While the investigating committee that will come to Cyprus examines the reasons that led to the disturbances, there is no doubt that, if they are kind enough to research the issues that we indicate they will do a favour to England and the honour of the Empire will grow. After [the committee] comprehend the reasons of the discontent and if these reasons are removed with good will, the Constitution will last long and will be useful.

As we obey and comply to orders that are included in the official announcement regarding the abolition of the Legislative Council we want to believe that the Colonial Office will take into consideration our quite humble desires and demands and that the Government will satisfy our needs that safeguard our life and property in this island and we shall live with this hope for the future.<sup>439</sup>

In this rather misleadingly-titled editorial, Mehmet Remzi tried to get through to his readers the views of the nationalists without being subjected to the strict censorship laws that were imposed after the disturbances.<sup>440</sup> Like all Cypriot newspapers, on the front page of its edition of 19th November, *Söz* published the Letters Patent that had been issued three days earlier, according to which the constitution was withdrawn. For the nationalists, Greek or Turkish Cypriot, this was a move towards autocracy, but the author avoided attacking the government directly. Instead, the author adopted a quite mild attitude towards the Governor, accepting the necessity of the measures taken. Since conditions were volatile and it was not clear whether the Legislative Council was going to be restored, Mehmet Remzi could only ask for the satisfaction of the community's demands. Both *Söz* and *Hakikat* newspapers recalled the constructive and cooperative attitude of the Turkish Cypriot community, but each with quite opposite objectives. The *evkâfçılar* wanted to preserve the status quo and

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<sup>439</sup>*Söz* PIO, 19/11/1931, No. 514, p.1.

<sup>440</sup>Panteli, *A History of Cyprus*, p. 134.

retain control of the community, while the nationalists invoked the community's loyalty in order to request that its autonomy be restored. The author, realizing that the nationalists were not in a position to express their demands in a more aggressive tone, guaranteed that they would comply with the new situation, but expressed the hope that the government would in exchange "safeguard the life and property" of the community.

The autocratic government that followed the October 1931 disturbances limited the political weight of the nationalists, but not the ideological impact of Kemalist ideas. The *evkâfçılar* retained control of the community and the nationalists had to wait until the 1940s to gain some political representation. For the moment, though, they invested all hope in the government, hoping that the Colonial Office would consider their demands. In the weeks following the Letters Patent, *Söz* devoted its front page to news from Turkey and Europe, while there was no editorial from Mehmet Remzi. The fear of censorship appeased the usually aggressive tone of the newspaper. On December 10, Mehmet Remzi published another moderate article that praised the government:

Those who get up in anger sit down with injury.<sup>441</sup>

This is a Turkish proverb. The Greeks of Cyprus displayed their anger by rising against the Government and by burning down the Governor's House. According to them the reason is that the island was not ceded to Greece. Very often, angry people cannot think that they will not be able to deal with the man with whom they are angry. They cry and shout unconsciously, and when they receive a few blows as the punishment for their actions, then, they understand with whom they are dealing. Our compatriots acted with the same spirit. Naturally, the Government will shortly call upon them to compensate for the damage that they have done, and then they will realize the result of their anger. But the Government sustained both material and moral damages and in order to have these moral damages compensated as well, it abolished the legislative rights and privileges enjoyed by the country. The people of Cyprus who were living in a wide circle of liberty are now pressed in a narrow circle delimited by the new law.

We are not writing these things to show that we are pleased with what has happened. Because we are also suffering from the moral penalties imposed by the Government. But nevertheless, we consider the actions

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<sup>441</sup>The proverb in Turkish is *öfkeyle kalkan zararla oturur*. I prefer Redhouse Dictionary's translation "A person who loses his temper suffers in the end".

taken by the Government to be quite reasonable and justified. The fact which consoles us is that it has been understood that a “Question of Cyprus” does not exist. It has been declared by the Greek Government that such a question does not exist in its political program. On the other hand, the British Government, which had so far taken a position not quite clear, has found an opportunity to express its intentions.

According to Italian papers, the Imperial Defense Committee recommended that a naval basis should be established in Cyprus similar to that in Gibraltar. Several places in the island will be fortified with guns, and the garrison in Egypt will partly be removed to Cyprus. There is no doubt that these new measures will decide the fate of the island, and will give an answer to the question of annexation, which was the source of many evils. This will be a blessing for the whole population of the island, and will stabilize the peace and the discipline of the country. The truth of the proverb quoted above is thus proved, which we hope will be a lesson for the new generation.<sup>442</sup>

*Söz* and its editor, Mehmet Remzi, had seldom felt the need to publish an editorial in praise of the colonial government. In this editorial, he did express the nationalists’ discontent with the abolition of the Legislative Council and the other authoritarian measures, but could not avoid thanking the government for facing the Greek Cypriot riots because, according to his opinion, it put an end to the question of *Enosis*. I would argue that, in “reprimanding” the Greek Cypriot leadership for behaving irresponsibly, Mehmet Remzi also invited some criticism of the Turkish Cypriot nationalists’ aggressive reactions to the government during the previous period. Of course, the Turkish Cypriot leadership’s reactions never reached the extremes of the Greek Cypriot nationalists’ reactions, but this temporary change of attitude can be attributed to the atmosphere of appeasement caused by government restrictions. In a series of editorials under the title “White Flag”, *Teslim Bayrağı*, published in March 1932, Mehmet Remzi attempted an account of the struggle of the nationalists against the *Evkâf* policy and the *Evkâf* delegates. After praising Necati Bey for leading the nationalists to the electoral victory of 1930 and for properly representing the community, he concluded his editorial in a rather unexpected way:

[...] While our communal issues were following a natural course within a regular organization the events of 21 October took place as a

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<sup>442</sup>SA1, 517.1926.1 *Söz*, no. 517, 10/12/1931.

work of bad luck, and unfortunately as a result the administrative and legislative responsibilities of the country unfortunately passed to the hands of the Government with the abolition of the Legislative Council. Under these circumstances it's unreasonable and impossible to continue with our struggle. Therefore, once we make sure that the local and the central governments have comprehended our issues and made sure that they will support the community in these issues we believe that we have to put an end to our struggle and turn over these affairs to the Government. [...] <sup>443</sup>

It is not difficult to comprehend Mehmet Remzi's transformation. The preservation of good relations with the Colonial Government was the cornerstone of the *evkâfçılar*'s policy for over thirty years, and the nationalists fought this submissive attitude time and again, especially after the emergence of Necati Özkan as their leader. Nevertheless, the new situation – after the disturbances and the ban on all political activity – led the editor of *Söz* to adopt a more realistic stance. Necati Özkan replied to Mehmet Remzi in an article entitled “Our Struggle is legitimized, there is no Place for Despair”, which was published on April 4, 1932. After returning the compliment to the editor, Necati Özkan categorically refused to surrender the nationalist battle and expressed his sadness for Mehmet Remzi's suggestions. He concluded in the following way:

[...] The day we give up our struggle we will take responsibility for the fate that will meet us. And let there be no doubt that this responsibility is going to be heavy. Because, while the government decides on our behalf, it will be excused due to the fact that it is alien to our rightful wishes and the responsibility for any distorted activity will fall upon us for not enlightening the government. And then we will have lost the right to complain. Concluding I would like to say that giving up the protection of our rights is nothing but an unacceptable, lazy submission and no nation can surrender its fate. Taking power from these ideas I am saying that we are secure when we hold tight the flag of the struggle and when we do not this means the death of the community. And I, Mr. Remzi, am determined to hold this flag until the end. <sup>444</sup>

Necati Özkan's rhetoric was not altered by the government's measures. What is striking, though, is the personal attack against Mehmet Remzi. A similar dispute took place

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<sup>443</sup>*Söz*, 17/3, 24/3 and 31/3/1932 quoted in Birinci, *M. Necati Özkan*, pp. 200-7.

<sup>444</sup>*Söz*, 7/4/1932, No. 533, *Ibid*, pp. 207-210.

between Mehmet Zekâ and the editor of *Masum Millet*, Con Rifat. After the abolition of the Legislative Council, Mehmet Zekâ, a lawyer and member for Famagusta-Larnaca district, was appointed by the government to the Advisory Council. When Zekâ went to England in early 1932, in order to sit exams and take his diploma as a barrister, Con Rifat accused him of “abandoning his duty”.<sup>445</sup> When lawyer and frequent *Söz* columnist Ahmet Raşit decided to emigrate to Turkey for personal reasons in May 1932, it was as if the nationalist movement lost an indispensable member.<sup>446</sup> The nationalists’ frustration with the government’s decisions led to such disputes. The abolition of the Legislative Council deprived nationalist leaders of the ability to criticize the government and control the *Evkâfçılar*. Necati Özkan himself admitted that he could not fight the nationalist battle on his own.<sup>447</sup>

The 1931 disturbances did not signify the end of the road for the nationalist battle. Necati Özkan and Mehmet Zekâ frequently published articles in *Söz* that attacked the Evkâf and government policy. Mehmet Remzi soon recovered his old militant style, although he did not always escape the censorship laws. As a matter of fact, the newspaper was suspended for a month in August 1937. In a report by the Press Officer, which was sent to the Colonial Secretary on June 29, 1938, we learn that the penalty was imposed for the “publication of an article on the subject of the attempts of young Muslims at that time to emigrate to Turkey without passports, and in open boots”. This article contained seditious references to Turkey as the “Fatherland” and was calculated to do great public mischief by suggesting that what was in fact a series of adolescent escapades was instead part of a widespread impulse to emigrate to Turkey, necessitated by the living conditions in Cyprus. It was considered that the article, which had been preceded by other objectionable articles in the same newspaper,

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<sup>445</sup>Harid Fedai (ed.), *Başhâkim Zekâ Bey: Anı-Yaşantı* (Girne: Çarok, 2002), p. 22.

<sup>446</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 209-210.

<sup>447</sup>Birinci, *M. Necati Özkan*, p.211.

would be interpreted as a call to the Moslem population to place allegiance to Turkey before allegiance to the Government of Cyprus and Great Britain”.<sup>448</sup>

Keeping in mind that Cyprus was under autocratic rule throughout the 1930s, one must approach the comments of the Press Officer cautiously, since it was that office that controlled and censored the press. In that sense, the newspaper’s attitude towards the government and the *Evkâf* had not changed since it was first published in 1921. It never attempted to hide its nationalist, pro-Kemalist stance. It is striking, though, that the colonial government insisted on referring to the Turkish Cypriots as “the Moslem population”, even though sixteen years had passed since the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey and the institutionalization of Turkish nationalism. According to the Press Officer in the years 1937-1938, *Söz* published extensively on Turkey, using “expressions such „our Atatürk” and „the homeland” or „Our Turkey””. This was the rule before the implementation of the censorship laws. The Press Officer was of the opinion that *Söz* have sought to encourage a spirit of Turkish nationalism, to represent Turkey as the only protector of Moslem Cypriots and to belittle the authority and goodwill of the British Administration in the island”.<sup>449</sup>

The autocratic measures that were adopted in 1931 gave the government an opportunity to close down *Söz*. The Colonial Secretary even asked the Police to obtain evidence regarding the funding of the newspaper by the Turkish Government.<sup>450</sup> In a confidential report by *Evkâf* Delegate Mehmet Münir Bey to the Colonial Officer, dated 24<sup>th</sup> May, 1928, the editor of *Söz* was described as a “miserable parasite, subsidized by the Turkish Consul”.<sup>451</sup> Mehmet Münir had every reason to attack Mehmet Remzi but his allegations were not proven. Nevertheless, even if they were true, they were not enough to explain Mehmet Remzi’s attitude towards the end of the 1930s. I argue that sixteen years had passed since the establishment of the Turkish Republic and the consolidation of Turkish

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<sup>448</sup>FCO141/2426, Report of the Press Officer to the Colonial office, 29/6/1938, 140-149.

<sup>449</sup>Ibid., 136.

<sup>450</sup>Ibid, 104, Colonial Secretary to Commissioner of Police, 26/3/1938.

<sup>451</sup>Ibid. 17-18, Mehmet Münir to Colonial Secretary, 24/5/1928.

nationalism in Anatolia, and the majority of the Turkish Cypriots had by then embraced the new ideology. By looking at the Turkish press of the time, we see that many Turkish Cypriots rushed to the port of Famagusta to welcome the Turkish warship *Hamidiye*,<sup>452</sup> that the Turkish Cypriots lived a life that resembled life in the Turkish Republic from a social and political perspective<sup>453</sup> and that the Turkish Cypriot schools were following the Turkish curriculum.<sup>454</sup> By 1938, most Turkish Cypriots had adopted a Turkish-Kemalist identity. The rise in the number of schools, the implementation of the Turkish curriculum, the rise in the percentage of literacy and the consolidation of the Turkish Republic were all factors that precipitated the domination of Turkish nationalism in Cyprus. As in Turkey, the Kemalist version of Turkish nationalism gradually replaced the Ottoman- Muslim identity in Cyprus. Undoubtedly, the colonial government saw the nationalist movement in Cyprus with suspicion and preferred to side with the *Evkâfçılar* despite the growing popularity of Kemalist ideas. Having said that, though, we should add that the British did not oppose the Kemalist reforms. In fact, the government facilitated the implementation of the language reform and had no reason to intervene in the issue of the dress code, the abolition of the fez or the headscarf. Of course, the autocratic rule that was imposed after 1931 restricted the use of national symbols for both communities. This, though, did not impede the consolidation of nationalism. The issue of the community's autonomy was of course a constant source of discontent for the nationalists until the end of British rule, but that was not the only reason behind Mehmet Remzi's rhetoric. As we have seen in chapter 3, Mehmet Remzi served as a teacher before he devoted himself to journalism. His previous professional identity infiltrated his writing style. Through his columns, Mehmet Remzi attempted to illuminate his readers, to lead them towards the light, like a teacher does with his students. The Turkish Cypriots were ignorant (*cahil*) and the Turkish Cypriot intellectual elite had undertaken the task of

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<sup>452</sup>Son Posta, 24/6/1938, in Christos Pampalos and Ioannis Theocharides, *O Tourkikos Tipos gia tin Kipro (1928-1945)* (Nicosia: Kentro Meleton Ieras Monis Kykkou, 2008), p. 212.

<sup>453</sup>*Cumhuriyet*, 19/9/1936 in Ibid., p. 165-165.

<sup>454</sup>*Milliyet*, 19/10/1932 in Ibid., p. 103-4.



their enlightenment. Since parts of the Turkish Cypriot population had not fully adopted Kemalist ideology, Mehmet Remzi considered his task incomplete. Just as Kemalist ideals were imposed by force in Republican Turkey, allowing little or no space to opposition, Turkish Cypriot nationalists felt that they had to make sure that the ideological transformation of the Turkish Cypriot society was complete. Hence, publications referred to “a party in Cyprus working for the revival of the old religious system in Turkey”. According to the newspaper, that party “was centralized in the Evcâf office and supported by the British Government”.<sup>455</sup> As soon as Greek Cypriot revolt was suppressed and its leaders were sent into exile, *Enosis*, the biggest threat to Turkish Cypriot interests, was, temporarily at least, out of the question. The ban on political activity frustrated the nationalists and therefore the only way to propagate their ideas was through the press. Having gained enough popularity, and inspired by the Greek Cypriots and their anti-government stance, Turkish Cypriot nationalists felt that loyalty to the Government was out of date. The frequent attacks against the government prove this point.

## Conclusions

The National Congress was an attempt to express the political aspirations of the nationalist elite. Inspired by the principles of Kemalism and defining themselves as Turkish nationalists, they questioned the policy of the *Evkâfçılar* to ally with the government. The Congress addressed all issues related to the independence of the community from government control. The nationalists presented themselves as guardians of the Turkish Cypriot community’s interests, accusing their opponents of siding with the government only in order to serve their own interests. Although the nationalists identified with Kemalist Turkey and the *Evkâfçılar* with an Islamic-Ottoman identity, neither side avoided the controversies. Despite

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<sup>455</sup>FCO 141/2426, Report of the Press Censor to the Colonial Secretary, 11/3/1935, 45.

the fact that the Turkish Cypriots were a minority in a land administered by a Christian power, and felt the pressure of the Christian majority that aspired to unite the island with Greece, religion was not used as a unifying factor among the Turkish Cypriots. The nature of Turkish Cypriot Islam did not allow for religion to become a point of reference for Turkish Cypriots. This did not prevent the nationalists electing a Mufti, protesting the abolition of the post by the government, although this directly clashed with the Kemalist secular reforms. On the other side, the *Evkâfçılar* did not react to the government policy of intervening in the Islamic institutions, supporting British policy and disregarding all reactions as harmful for the community. This persistent support for the government can be attributed to the struggle of the *Evkâfçılar* to retain their privileged position in the community and the colonial government. The Greek Cypriot revolt in October 1931 and abolition of political bodies limited political activity, but the struggle of the nationalists to transform the community according to Kemalist principles continued.

## CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation examined the Turkish Cypriot community between 1918 and 1931, with a view to exploring its nature as it transformed from a Muslim community to an ethnic minority. I argued that nationalism among Turkish Cypriots was consolidated during that period, due to a combination of factors. These were the consolidation of Turkish nationalism, the intensification of Greek Cypriot efforts to achieve *Enosis* of Cyprus with Greece and the intransigence of the British colonial government. I maintained that, although the Turkish Cypriots were influenced by the ideological debate that took place in the Ottoman Empire through the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries about the nature of Ottoman and Turkish nationalism, the emergence and consolidation of Turkish nationalism in Cyprus was only possible after the institutionalization of nationalism in the Republic of Turkey. With the spread of Turkish nationalism in Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriots acquired an important tool that helped them confront Greek Cypriot political activity. Finally, the policy of the colonial government to centralize the Muslim institutions, in an apparent attempt to control the community, precipitated the spread of Turkish nationalism, because what was described by the British as an attempt to regulate the finances of the community was actually perceived as a blatant intervention in the affairs of the community.

Furthermore, I demonstrated how this transition to modernity influenced the Turkish Cypriot elite. I argued that the traditional elite, which owed its power to its good relations with the colonial government, felt threatened by the emergence of a nationalist elite whose main aim was to secure the community's autonomy and the transformation of the Turkish Cypriots into a secular society in accordance with Kemalist principles. This debate between the traditional and the modern elite had an impact on the formation of Turkish Cypriot identity. I claimed that this debate should not be approached exclusively as an ideological debate between a traditionalist and a nationalist elite.<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>456</sup>This point is going to be discussed further on in this chapter.

In my examination of the transformation of the Turkish Cypriot community, I used articles from the local press extensively. I chose to focus on two newspapers, *Söz* and *Hakikat*, because they epitomized the division of the community and its elite in that period. I insisted on the importance of the press for two reasons. First, in this transitional period of Cypriot history, the press was the most successful vehicle for the dissemination of political ideas. Second, with the emergence of the nationalist elite, the press was used extensively by candidates during the electoral campaign or in order to win popular support for political events such as the National Congress of 1931. As Cypriot politics, too, entered modernity, the press became a public sphere of an increasingly politicized class. Due to the peculiarities of the Cypriot case, namely the prevalence of a nationalist rather than a class discourse as a result of the Greek Cypriot pro-*Enosis* movement, public discourse was for decades dominated by the ethnic conflict. This conflict overshadowed financial and social issues and made cooperation between the communities almost impossible.

I attempted to deconstruct the idea put forward by some Turkish Cypriot historians that the Turkish Cypriots were, already from the first steps of the Kemalist regime, ardent and militant supporters of secular reforms. Study of the extent of the popularity of Kemalist ideals among Turkish Cypriots in the 1920s is not possible, because very few members of that generation are alive and available to interview. This, however, is not the only reason. We have at our disposal memoirs of politicians like Necati Özkan, teachers like Hıfıye Ziya Hacıbulgur<sup>457</sup> and journalists like Beria Özoran, who seem to agree on one issue: how much they all supported the Kemalist cause. I argue that this determinist approach to Turkish Cypriot history is not limited to the 1920s. From 1878 to 1974, Turkish Cypriot history is dominated by the struggle for national survival. And this explains the inevitability of Kemalist nationalism for the Turkish Cypriot community. Faced with the danger of enslavement under the Greek Cypriots in case the latter succeeded in uniting Cyprus with Greece, the Turkish Cypriots were obliged to adopt the Kemalist reforms and comply with the model of the ideal

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<sup>457</sup>Nesim, *Batmayan*, pp. 203-204.

Turk: secular, patriotic, willing to sacrifice himself for the fatherland and Kemalist ideology. Even if there were an alternative, the Turkish Cypriots did not have the luxury of straying from the wider Turkish family. There were, though, more practical reasons for the adoption of the reforms. The Kemalist reforms were regarded as progressive and they satisfied the need of the community for modernization.

Despite the complaints of the nationalists, the Kemalist reforms were actually implemented in Cyprus rather quickly and effectively, probably even more effectively than in mainland Turkey. It seems, however, that any delay in their implementation was not due to reactions or to the colonial government's anti-Kemalist stance. In some cases, the reforms could not be absorbed that easily by the community. The language reform of 1928, for example, was implemented almost immediately. Yet three years later, we read in a dispatch of the Commissioner to the Colonial Secretary that:

[...] the majority of Moslems in villages still find a difficulty in reading the new Turkish characters. In most, if not in every village, there are, however, one or two persons who can read the new characters. There is, therefore no great objection to Government notices and printed documents being written in the Roman characters, but I think that communications written by hand should continue to be sent in Arabic script or, as at present, in both [...] <sup>458</sup>

This probably explains why pro-government and nationalist newspapers like *Söz* and *Masum Millet* continued to be published partly or wholly in Ottoman. The language reform was indeed implemented with the support of the government, but it was met with the disapproval of those directly affected, the religious scholars. In a petition that was sent to the government on April 21, 1930, Yusuf Ziyaeddin, an ex-teacher at a religious school (medrese), protested against the "removal of the Muslim letters from the schools" and the obligation on "the poor officials and Muslims to learn the Latin characters which do not properly suit [the Turkish] language".<sup>459</sup> In the same petition, the author protested against the abolition of the religious institutions and compared the Kemalist government to the Bolshevik regime, due to former's "abolition of religious institutions and national habits".

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<sup>458</sup>SA/1320/1928, Commissioner to the Colonial Secretary, 23/12/1931.

<sup>459</sup>SA/1320/1928, letter by Yusuf Ziyaeddin, 21/4/1930.

Even if Yusuf Ziyaeddin's allegations represented only a small part of the population, that of religious scholars, a part of the Turkish Cypriot population probably shared his thoughts and worries. Nevertheless, the dynamic of Kemalist ideology was such that it soon prevailed entirely in Cyprus, too, becoming an undisputed element of Turkish Cypriot identity.

The transition from Ottoman to Turkish identity limited the possibilities for *kıbrıslılık*, or Cypriotness, to flourish. As we have seen, the evolution of Greek nationalism in Cyprus into a force that excluded the Turkish Cypriot community from post-colonial Cyprus made the emergence of Cypriotness almost impossible. By applying Anderson's theory<sup>460</sup>, we can explain the transformation of the Cypriot Muslim to a Cypriot Turk and the Cypriot Christian to Cypriot Greek within forty years of the beginning of British rule, with the help of the press and nationalist education. While the Greek Cypriots had gone through this process earlier, it took less than ten years for a Muslim farmer from Limassol or Larnaca to become a Cypriot Turk before becoming a Cypriot. In other words, I argue, Cypriotness failed to evolve into a common identity that could encompass both communities. And this failure should not be attributed exclusively to the policy of divide-and-rule, as Cypriot historiography often claims. Cypriotness failed to evolve into a viable alternative to Greek and Turkish nationalisms because the nationalist elites did all they could to prevent this. The popularity of the Communist Party of Cyprus, with the participation of over two thousand Turkish Cypriots through the Pancyprian Federation of Labour (PEO),<sup>461</sup> could have created the conditions for setting aside Greek and Turkish national identity in favour of Cypriotness, but the anti-communism of the elites and the autocratic measures of the government after 1931, which outlawed the Communist Party, obstructed the emergence of a class identity. The issue of Cypriotness, though, or rather of the hindrance of its emergence, is outside the scope of this research.

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<sup>460</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

<sup>461</sup> Şevki Kıralp, "Akel ve Kıbrıslılık" in Mehmet Hasgüler and Murat Özkaleli (eds.), *Kıbrıs'ta Kimlik ve Değişim: Post Annan Sürecinde Ada* (Istanbul: Alfa, 2012) p. 267.

Despite occasional complaints, both communities managed to control their schools, appoint the teachers they chose and, most importantly, apply the curriculum that was approved by the ministries of education in Athens and Ankara. The debate about the administration of the Lycée, as we saw in chapter 5, did not focus on the quality of education. I argued that the nationalists sought to control the school in order to fully implement a nationalist curriculum. I maintained that the nationalists, driven by the principles of Kemalism, resisted the control of the community by the government, because such dependency on a Christian, Western power was against those anti-colonial, anti-imperialist principles.

In chapters 6 and 7, I examined the 1930 elections for the Legislative Council and the 1931 National Congress that signified the first major victory of the nationalist elite over the *Evkâfçılar*. I attempted to show that the economic situation on the island at the end of the 1920s combined with an increase in the popularity of Kemalist ideas and discontent with the colonial government, which offered two out of the three Turkish seats to the nationalist candidates and removed the Delegate of the *Evkâf* from the Council. The electoral campaign focused on issues regarding the independence of the community's institutions and the administration of the Turkish Lycée. The Turkish Cypriot press played an important role in the campaign. *Söz* actively supported the main nationalist candidate, Necati Özkan, by attacking the *Evkâfçılar* and promising its readership that the victory of the nationalists would restore the community's control over its institutions. On the contrary, *Hakikat* expressed the opinion that a nationalist victory would be harmful to the interests of the community, because it would threaten the good relations between the Turkish Cypriot elite and the colonial government. In fact, both parties used a similar dilemma to the electorate: if voters did not elect their candidates, the interests of the community would be at stake.

The National Congress that took place in 1931 further alienated the two elites. The nationalists, strengthened by the election results, attempted to capitalize on their victory by organizing a congress that vowed to represent the whole of the community. I argued that Necati Özkan, who hosted the Congress in his own home, knew that the government was not

going to acknowledge the Congress and its results. Yet the Congress had a wider significance for the nationalists: it resembled the congresses that had been organized by the Turkish nationalists in Anatolia during the Turkish War of Independence, which expressed the demands of the Turkish nation. I maintain, thus, that the National Congress was an opportunity for the nationalists to demonstrate their newly acquired power. The *Evkâfçılar* were alarmed by this development and were quick to show their disapproval. Their reaction demonstrated their fear of losing the power that they had secured through smooth relations with the government. I argue that the core of the debate was political. It was a debate for the control of the community and the control of the community's institutions. The attack on the Muslim institutions and the decision of the colonial government to side with the *Evkâfçılar* drove the opposition towards an anticolonial nationalism.

In chapter 4, I compared the two prominent figures of Turkish Cypriot politics in that period, Mehmet Münir and Necati Özkan. The former, a lawyer and government official, rose to the position of the head of the *Evkâf* and, by virtue of this office, evolved through his control of almost all communal institutions into a leader of the Turkish Cypriots. The colonial government justified these appointments on the ground that Mehmet Münir was the only Turkish Cypriot who was capable of running the community's affairs. The truth is that Mehmet Münir managed to remain Delegate of the *Evkâf* for over two decades due to a clientelist network that was supported with funds from the *Evkâf*. Necati Özkan was a self-made entrepreneur and ardent nationalist who challenged the dominance of Mehmet Münir and the *Evkâf* system. His election in the Legislative Council was the first major blow to Mehmet Münir's powers and a sign that the nationalists could not be ignored by the colonial government. The measures taken by the government after the 1931 disturbances put an end to all political activity and eliminated the nationalists' political power. This, however, did not signify the end of the nationalist struggle to transform the community along Kemalist principles.

Finally, Chapter 3 compared the two best-selling Turkish Cypriot newspapers, *Söz* and *Hakikat*. I attempted a portrayal of Remzi Okan, the editor of *Söz*, which was the main



newspaper that promoted Turkish nationalism. For over twenty years from when the newspaper was first published in 1921, he served the nationalist cause by pushing for the implementation of the Kemalist reforms and attacking the *Evkâf* administration at every opportunity. Remzi Okan, a former teacher, used the columns of his newspaper to enlighten his public. *Hakikat*, on the other side, voiced the opinion of the *Evkâfçılar*. The newspaper had a more moderate attitude towards its opponents, although it often engaged in debates with *Söz* about the latter's comments on the *Evkâf*. It supported the community's loyalty to the government, claiming that any attempt by the community to oppose the government would put its interests in danger. In all, I argue, the two newspapers, like the parties they supported, were not that different in essence.

To conclude, the national awakening of the Turkish Cypriots may have started at the same time as that of the Turks elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire, but the formation of their ethnic identity was completed with the consolidation of Turkish nationalism in the Republic of Turkey. The Turkish Cypriot nationalist elite that emerged after 1920 challenged the traditional elite, but their objectives and aspirations in essence did not vary considerably. The gradual prevalence of Kemalism in Cyprus in the following decades solved the debate in favour of the nationalists. Political turmoil and ethnic conflict in the 1960s and the 1970s ended with the emancipation of the Turkish Cypriots. The debate between the secular and the religious character of Turkish Cypriot identity, however, re-emerged only recently, after a similar debate began in mainland Turkey.

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